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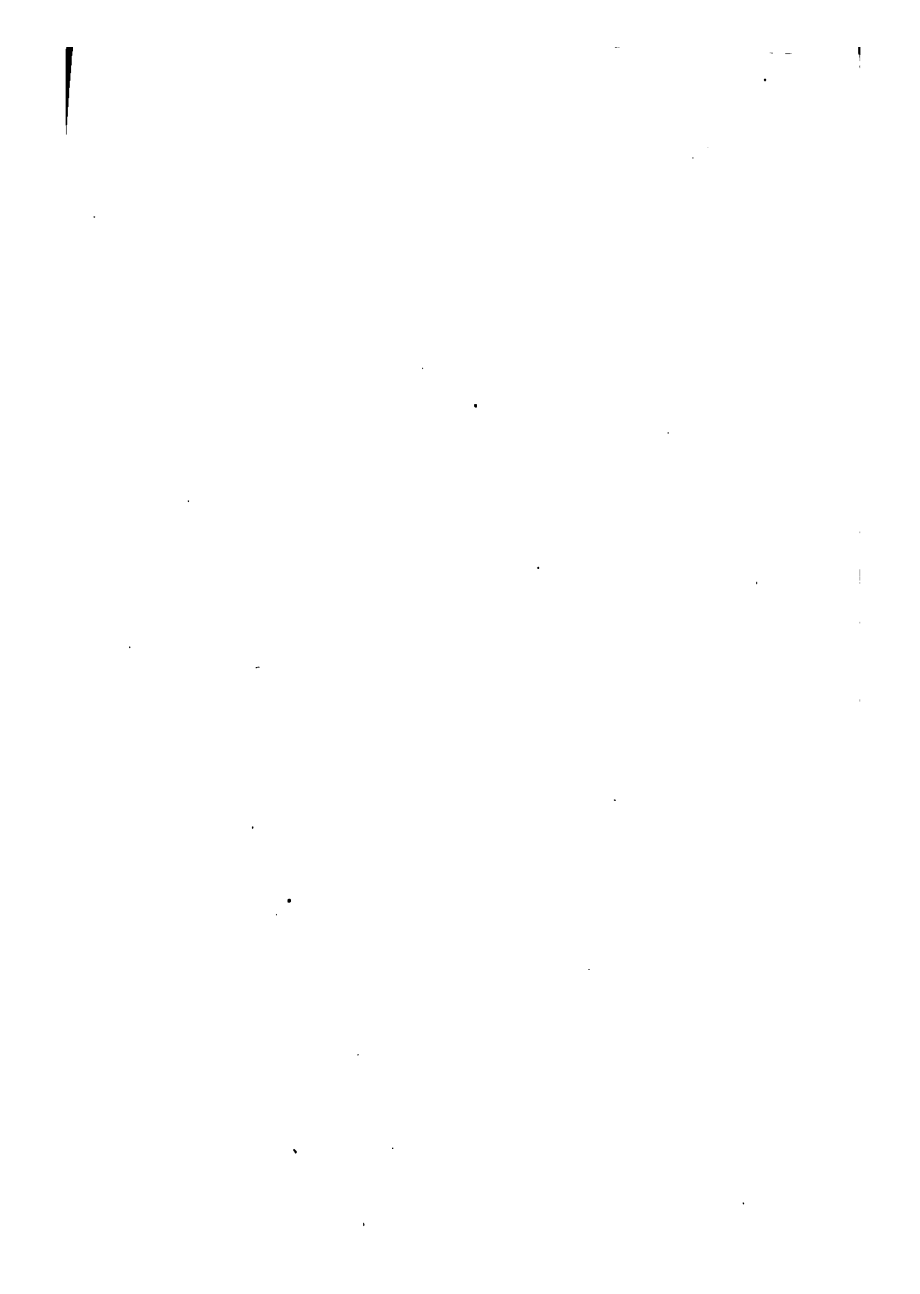
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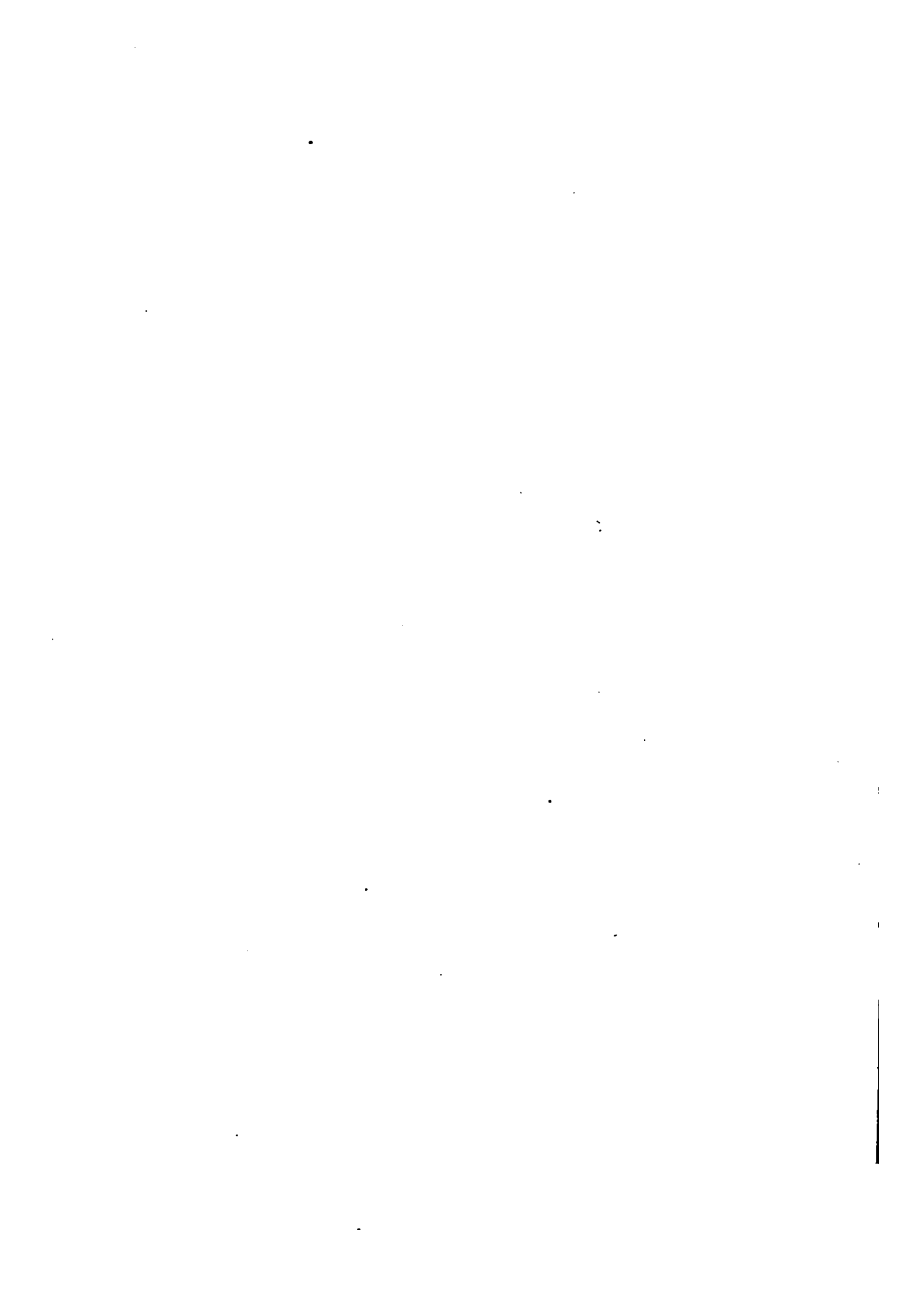






MARJORY.

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON





Ber and Marjory in the "Dolphin."—See page 77.

MARJORY;
OR,
THE GIFT OF PEACE.

BY
EMMA MARSHALL,
AUTHOR OF "PRIMROSE," "THE LITTLE PEACUITSERS,"
"STELLAFONT ABBEY," ETC. ETC.

"The Lord shall give strength unto His people:
The Lord shall give His people the blessing of *peace*."

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M A R J O R Y.

CHAPTER I.

SUMMER HEAT.



NOT a breath was stirring; the great expanse of St. Chad's Bay lay in perfect calm, reflecting the blue canopy above it in one unbroken plain of sapphire blue. Not a tiny wavelet danced at the foot of the rocky headland which shot out eastward. Not a single ripple told where the water kissed the foot of St. Chad's Pillar, standing erect and lonely at the eastern extremity of the bay. On the beach nothing moved; a few boats lay keel upwards on the shingle, and

some brown nets spread to dry were watched over by a dog of no particular breed—a large tawny nondescript, with a bullet head and a pointed nose, and a tail of short bristly hair, which at the present moment seemed to share the spell of quiet and inaction which fell upon everything, for it lay in a direct line with the dog's head, straight, stiff, and still. Nevertheless, Jock was not asleep, or rather he was gifted with the power of keeping one eye open while he slept. Jock was not the dog to forget his business in life, and just now that business was to guard the nets and a basket of fishing tackle and other property in one of the boats, which was lying on its side, and showed its name in white letters—"THE MARJORY, ST. CHAD'S."

Upward from the spot where Jock lay in profound stillness, the beach shelved towards a level plateau of sand and sharp-pointed tough grass, varied here and there by the tiny pink blossoms of the hardy little vetch and mallow, growing bravely in thick clumps where they could, at uncertain distances.

Above this plain of sand was a road running in the curve of the bay for about a mile and

a half, and then came two or three fishermen's cottages at the base of a steep cliff, up which a path wound in and out amongst the gorse and tangle of brushwood to the village above.

Here in the village everything was quiet too, for the children were lying listlessly about in the heat, and their mothers were too tired and hard-worked to reprove or scold them. Even Mrs. Sharpe, the laundress, could scarcely do more than grumble in an undertone, and twitch the clothes from the gooseberry bushes in the garden with a faint cross murmur, something between a grumble and a growl, and a few disjointed words about the heat and the hard work, and the "laziness to which some folks were born and bred!"

St. Chad's people could go back in thought to many summers, but surely this burning, oppressive' August afternoon was without its precedent, and even the folks who were, as Mrs. Sharpe said, "born and bred to do nothing," felt nearly overcome.

The village of St. Chad's sloped ever upwards. The church and the pretty rose-twined

Vicarage rose higher than the street, and higher still was St. Chad's Court, nearly hidden by trees, and only from the upper windows catching a sight of the beautiful sapphire sea, as it lay motionless and quiet, like that sea of glass mingled with fire of which Marjory had read with wonder at the Sunday-school not long ago.

And now I am come to Marjory, I feel as if I had something pleasant to say. There are some people upon whom adverse circumstances seem to have absolutely no power. They carry about their own sunshine; they shed it on those around them; they are too simple and sincere to brood over wrongs; too gentle and loving to worry themselves with the faults of others; too bright and cheerful to let the clouds of life darken and overshadow them. Not that these people are without sympathy, that blessed, thrice blessed gift which gold cannot buy; on the contrary, they feel the joys of others with a quick glad pride, and their sorrows with a throb of pain; but they hold the golden key which opens the gate of comfort

for themselves and for others, and that golden key is love—love in its widest, fullest sense—the love which covers the multitude of sins—the love which comes down from that hillside in Judea in a precious purifying stream—the love of God.

Such was Marjory—*my* Marjory, as her sailor father proudly called her—*my* Marjory, whose name was with him when following his calling on the dark wintry sea—*my* Marjory, who had taken the place of another Marjory, who had passed long ago into the kingdom where they hunger and thirst no more, and tears are wiped away.

Our little Marjory's mother had been a servant at the Court, and when she married, she went to live with her husband down in one of the cottages on the beach, though his mother, unwilling to part with her son, wished him to take up his abode with his wife at the Lodge, where she had lived ever since her widowhood, taking charge of the gate and looking after a large colony of fowls and pigeons and bees, in which Mrs. Merivale delighted.

But Albert Rayner knew a union of households seldom answered, so, for the space of his short married life, he lived in a cottage down on the beach; though, when he was left with his two children forlorn and helpless, he no longer refused his mother's offer, and came to take up his abode with her when ashore, leaving his little ones to her care—a boy and a girl—the boy a poor, deformed, helpless cripple, with small distorted limbs and a pale pathetic face, in which the beauty of his sister might be seen as we see the reflection of a pretty face in the bowl of a spoon.

Poor little Albert, who took his name from his father, who had been so called in honour of the marriage-day of our good Prince Consort, on which day he had been born, had been dropped by his mother from her arms in climbing up the steep bit of cliff which I have described. How the accident happened no one ever knew, but certain it is the poor mother was never quite herself again; and a settled melancholy possessed her. "Albert Rayner's Marjory is daft-like," the neighbours

said; "she'll never be the same again." And they were right—she never was.

When her beautiful baby, Marjory, smiled on her with her gentian-coloured eyes, she made no answering sign. She would sit with the little helpless cripple on her knee by the hour together, but she scarcely heeded her new-born treasure. And when the baby was six months old she was left motherless. Then soon after the cottage home on the beach was broken up, and the children went to their grandmother at the Lodge, where we now find them.

Old Mrs. Rayner held herself high, the people in the village said. She spoke of "our poultry" and "our bees." She would tell with pride of the prizes taken at the great poultry shows by her dorkings and cochins. And it was always "our carriage" and "our horses;" sometimes "our house in London."

I do not think Mrs. Rayner was a loveable woman; caresses and tender words were not in her way. She loved her son and did her

duty by his children, but, like many of us, duty was with Mrs. Rayner only another name for drudgery, and she thereby missed the sweetness of life. This sultry, hot afternoon tried her, for she was no longer a young woman. Two of her best broods had died off; a hawk, soaring above the St. Chad's woods, had carried off one of the pure white fantail pigeons; and the whole of the last bushel of meal brought in from Castleton had been bad. So as far as the poultry went, things did not go very smoothly with Mrs. Rayner, and it was in a sharp, cross voice that she said, as she came in from the inspection of the fowls, fanning herself with her sun-bonnet—

“I thought I told you to go down to White's, Marjory, with the eggs, and fetch up the bit of bacon for your father's supper. I'm going to boil it with some beans. He'll want his supper, so look sharp.”

Marjory rose from her seat by her brother's little chair, where she had been reading to him and fanning him with a large cabbage leaf, and said, “I must go now, dear Ber.”

The large wistful eyes turned wearily upon Marjory, and the boy said—

“Yes; and do go down to the beach and see if you can get me another of the red anemones—the tide will have gone back—this one is dead,” and the child touched a lump of dark red at the bottom of a blue and white bason with his little thin fingers. “Do get me another, Marjory.”

“I’ll try if I can; and next time father is in Castleton he said he would bring you—guess what?—a glass bowl for all your creatures! Won’t that be nice?”

“Take away that bason, Marjory, and throw the things away. I hate creatures out of their places, and them half-dead things have no business in a sugar bason. The one with the crack is broken to pieces, so I must have this one. Here! give them to me—nasty stinking things!”

“Oh! please, Grannie,” Marjory pleaded; but the bason was snatched up, and Mrs. Rayner departed to throw its contents into the dust-heap.

Great tears gathered in the boy's eyes, and he muttered, "Horrid, cross old thing!"

"Hush, Ber! hush, dear Ber! We'll tell father; he is sure to get the glass globe. Now don't cry, dear. Kiss Marjory before she goes. Look, I will leave you some fresh cabbage leaves; put one on your forehead, it is so cool. Grannie is coming back, so I must go. I'll be very quick," she said, tying on her wide straw hat. "Good-bye, dearie!"

CHAPTER II.

A VERY GENERAL SHOP.

WAY went Marjory down the bowery lane to the village. The heat of the sun was declining now, and the slightest rustle of a breeze was heard in the trees over her head. She was only eleven years old, but tall and well grown, and with a sweet serious expression in her eyes, which made people think her older than she was. It is certainly true that the unselfish loving ones in this world have a beauty of their own, and that eye and lip often tell the tale of heart and spirit even to casual observers. Now, as Marjory went swiftly on towards White's general shop, she sang, as she went, snatches of a hymn, then the verse of a psalm she had chanted in church the day before. "The Lord shall

give strength unto His people. The Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace." The words came to the child's lips as naturally as the notes to the birds in the woods. She sang for the gladness of her young heart, and because she could not help it. She hastened to despatch her business at White's general shop, which was indeed general in its stores. To gain entrance was at times difficult, and it required some skill to wind in and out between barrels, and hampers, and baskets, and to avoid contact with skins of lard, candles hanging in bunches from nails, sides of bacon, cold dark pudding, string, nails, sweets, cakes, red herrings, and dried haddocks.

White's business had descended from father to son for several generations, and they had managed to get together a "pretty bit of money," so the St. Chad's people said. The Whites were "close-fisted" and "near," and no long score could be run up in their books. They gave no credit, and took ready money for their goods. Probably this was the secret of their

prosperity; and as there was but one shop of the kind in St. Chad's of any standing, the Whites held their own, and throve almost to their heart's content.

The Whites now consisted of a brother and sister, middle-aged people, who had within the last five years buried both parents, and were now the heads of the concern. Nothing bright or pleasant seemed to come into the lives of the Whites. They lived in the little dark shop, crowded, stuffy, and unsavoury, all the week, and they spent most of Sunday reckoning up their profits in the room behind, which opened into a narrow strip of garden, where no flowers were allowed, because they were useless and did not turn into money, and could therefore not be mentioned in the same breath with cabbages and onions and a few potatoes, which were cultivated under the difficulties of narrow space and small accommodation.

The Whites were always a mystery to Marjory. She did so long to tidy up the place a little, to let in some air to brighten the aspect

of everything, from Miss White's dull greenish gown and black cap to Mr. White's long threadbare alpaca coat, with a never clean apron twisted round his waist. Now, as the child set her little basket down on the counter in a vacant space between a heap of dried fish and a large coarse cake, for which the village children paid a halfpenny or a penny a slice,—the dark colour produced by treacle deluding them into the idea that White's cake was supremely rich and good,—Marjory looked like a fresh rose brought from the Court into White's dingy little shop.

"I have brought a dozen eggs, please, Miss White—six dorkings and six brahmas; and Grannie wants two pounds of bacon, not too fat, please. I will leave the basket until I come back from the beach, please, and call for it on my way home. Have you a glass bottle to spare?"

Meanwhile Miss White was busily employed in examining the eggs, carefully weighing their respective merits.

"This new dorking is undersized, Marjory ;

your Grannie should have put two in. By rights I ought only to say fifteen pence a dozen, which would square the bacon. A glass bottle! Yes, you may have this for a halfpenny. What do you want it for?"

"Thank you, Miss White; that's got a nice wide neck; it will do beautifully. Here is the money."

Miss White took the halfpenny, glancing at it first with her keen eye, and then dropping it into the slit in the counter.

"It's very hot to-day, Marjory. I wonder at your tearing about; you'll put yourself into a fever one of these days. Well, call in on your way home, and I'll have the bacon ready."

"Thank you, Miss White," said the child, as she made room for a big burly man who now entered the shop, knocking down a basket of potatoes, and hitting his head against one of the suspended bunches of candles, till they swung violently off the nail.

"Bless me! what a place to hang your tallows, missus! Why, there ain't room to swing a cat

in this cabin. Can you tell me where a man named "——

Marjory was by this time out of the shop, and almost out of hearing; but she started and lingered a moment, for surely that man was inquiring for Albert Rayner. Her heart gave a sharp sudden throb, though she could not tell why; still she wished that man had not asked for her father; and yet something held her from going back to ask if he had really done so, and she went on to complete her mission.

The sapphire sea was all glowing in the western light as Marjory went down the cliff path. There were scarcely more signs of life than in the blazing heat of the earlier part of the afternoon. The boats still lay on their sides, the brown nets were still stretched out, but the receding tide had left a line of low dark rocks visible, and here some of the village children were paddling with naked legs in the cool clear pools, gathering periwinkles, and little active crabs, which sidled in and out amongst the sand and stones at the bottom.

Many of these pools were a miracle of love-

liness, which Marjory at least had eyes to see. She loved to watch the feathery red and white seaweeds wave hither and thither in their crystal beds, like miniature palm-trees. She delighted in the large crimson anemones, the lovely sea-flowers with their purple spots, or the amber and white ones all dotted with delicate red points.

It sometimes cost Marjory a good deal to detach the anemones from their pleasant homes, for she knew the blue and white sugar bason standing on the window ledge by Ber's bed must be a poor exchange for them. And surely no anemones were ever more gently handled than those which Marjory skilfully detached from the rocks for her brother's amusement and interest. Just now it was his prominent fancy ; for poor Ber was by no means steadfast in his likes and dislikes. His collections were manifold and various. Moths, butterflies, beetles, feathers, eggs, had all had their turn, and now anemones and limpets and shell-fish were in favour ; and the boy's ambition centred in a big glass globe like one he had

read of in one of the books which Miss Bumpstead, the Vicar's sister, had lent him. But big glass globes cost money, and were unattainable at St. Chad's; so Ber had to content himself with basons and bottles, as we have seen.

As Marjory crossed the sand and bank of



shingle, Jock's stubbly tail, which had been so stiff and rigid, became violently agitated. In a perfect ecstasy of joy, which no heat could repress, Jock wriggled and twisted himself into all imaginable contortions as the figure of his little mistress appeared. He advanced a few—a

very few—steps to meet her, and then returned to his post; for had not his master by a sign well known to Jock committed the boat and the nets to his care in the morning?—and he would not leave his post

for all the temptations which could assail dog nature.

"Why, Jock, good old Jock," Marjory said; "how long have you been here? I wondered where you were, Jock. I have not seen you since the morning. It is very hot, Jock, even though the sun is gone. Good Jock! I am going to the rocks. I shan't be long, and by that time I hope father will have come back. I can't think where he is."

Jock by a low whine expressed his wonder also, but resigned himself to his watch by the boat with a long-drawn sigh as Marjory tripped away. She was soon so much occupied in gathering her treasures safely into the bottle that she did not hear her father's step approaching. He called her and gave a low whistle, and she sprang upright at once.

"O father! I am coming. I was so busy gathering Ber's anemones I did not see you."

And in another minute Marjory had sprung without a single false step over the slippery boulders, which were covered with fine green

seaweed, and were perilous footholds for the uninitiated.

"Where have you been, father? I heard you get up at daybreak, and was so sorry you had not a bit of breakfast; but if you had told me, I'd have been up and had it ready."

"I know you would, my dear—I know you would. I've been to Castleton, Marjory, and pretty well settled to go to China for a year or two."

"Father!" Marjory's face grew very white, and she said, involuntarily, "What shall I do without you?"

"Ah, my lassie! and what shall I do without you? You are poor father's great joy and comfort, and always were."

"Are you in trouble, father?" Marjory asked. "Are you in trouble?—may I know?"

"Yes, it's only right you should know. Years ago a brother of your poor mother's got into trouble. I helped him out then, and he has been hanging on me ever since. I have had to pay up money on a bill I set my hand to; he vowed he'd have the money all square.

And I see no hopes of getting on here. Every farthing of earnings I had scraped up is gone, and the fishing trade in St. Chad's is not what it was. There's a ship lying in Castleton bound for China. I know the captain; and his mate has been cut off suddenly with fever. He's bound to sail next Saturday, and I have agreed to go. Don't look so sad about it, my Marjory. I'll be in the way of bringing home a good bit of money, for I think of turning an honest penny, as many folks often do, in the Chinese ports, and then I'll get rid of this log round my neck, which drags me lower and lower. I shall save and scrape till I can pay up, as I am bound, the sum for which I became security, and then I shan't be in dread and fear of what may come next. Come, now, cheer up."

Marjory was trying to take in the full extent of her father's words, the great bitterness of which lay in the fact that she was to lose him—that she was to be left behind, and he was to go. Now, as she looked up into his troubled face, she forgot herself. If he thought

it right to go, if he would earn money and be happier, how could she be so selfish as to show her own sorrow ?

So the gentian eyes, which looked like the flower with the dew of the morning in its deep cup, were fixed lovingly on her father, as she put her little hand in his.

"I will be very good to Ber and Grannie while you are gone, and I will help you to get ready. You must tell me what you want." And then, as the great rough hand pressed tight the little one which lay in his, the brave child's heart failed, and a quick short sob nearly choked Marjory.

Her father bent down, and, with a sudden gesture, pressed her close in his arms, and then in silence the two went up the cliff-side together, their hearts too full for words.

Just where the path turned into the village, a rough wooden bench was placed, and on it was seated a tall athletic-looking man, towards whom Jock sprang, barking furiously and growling ominously.

"Here, Jock, lie down, sir. What do you mean ? Lie down, Jock."

The man on the bench gave Jock a kick with his heavy boot, and said roughly, "Keep your cur quiet, will you?"

"I am sorry he barked at you," Albert Rayner said, "but anyhow he has got more than he gave, for you have nearly put his eye out."

Poor Jock's eye had received the full brunt of the heavy-nailed boot of the stranger, and Marjory was bending down over it in great distress, while Jock showed his loving gratitude by licking her hand as she wiped the injured eye with her white apron. Marjory recognised in the stranger the man who had come into White's shop inquiring for her father, and was therefore not surprised when he said, "I want to find one Albert Rayner. I've toiled up in this heat to his cottage, and only found a disagreeable old woman and a deformed cripple there. Can you give me any information about the man and where he is?"

"Yes," Albert Rayner said, "I can, for I am the man."

"Ha! ha! that's luck then. Well, you and I must have a bit of talk. I ain't a going to be

hard on you, but your name is set to a bill due last July. I lent that scoundrel, Jesse Minchin, your brother, fifty pounds. I did it out of good nature; and if you don't stump up—well, you see, I must take measures.”

“Run home, Marjory, my dear, run home and bathe Jock's eye, and tell Grannie I'll be there in half-an-hour.”

Marjory looked sadly and wistfully at her father as he sat down on the bench by the stranger's side and lingered a little.

“Go, my dear; I'll not be long.”

Marjory obeyed at once, turning sorrowfully away with Jock at her side, who at a word from his master, “Go home, Jock,” obeyed as his mistress did.

Albert Rayner watched his little daughter out of sight, and then, with a heavy sigh, said, “Well, what would you have me do? You are James Davies, I suppose.”

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE.

“YES, I *am* James Davies, and I’m come all the way from London on purpose to see you. That bill stands for fifty pounds and you’ve only paid ten. I want the rest; I’m hard up, and I must have it.”

“And I’m hard up too, and I can’t pay it. I told you so when I sent the five pounds last week. I’ve not a farthing more except my weekly earnings, which go to keep my two children; and so, I tell you plain. Give me time and I’ll make it good; he has left the country.”

“Yes, the scoundrel made off bag and baggage, with all his lies and thefts on his back.”

“Can’t think how it was you trusted him.”

"Well, well ! we had business together, and if things had not gone so to the bad, we'd have pulled through ; but they did go to the bad, worse luck."

"He told me his poor wife and youngsters were starving," Albert Rayner said, "and I knew the store my Marjory set by him. So I said I'd help him with my name ; I ought never to have done it, but it's no use moaning over spilt milk. I am in the way of making a little money, as I am going off for a cruise with good wages. By this time next year I'll be safe to pay you."

"Next year, man !—next year ! I want it now," Davies said, slapping his hand upon his knee. "Now, before I am a day older. Why, the old lady up there is living in clover, can't she fork out ?"

"She can't, and I would not ask her if she could. However, I'm going to sell my two boats, and tackle, and such like. What they bring you shall have—say five pounds."

"Well, be sharp then about it. When will you send the cash ?"

"Before I start on Monday, and the rest as soon as I can."

"Agreed, then. And now, will you turn into the 'Black Boar' and have a drink?"

"No," said Albert Rayner, stiffly. "I don't drink, thank you, and I'll bid you good-bye."

"Stop a bit, my man; you'll have to give me a written promise. I ain't the duffer you take me for. So you must turn in, and we'll borrow a pen and ink and a bit of paper."

This was done, and the agreement made out, and then, with a heavy heart and slow weary steps, Albert Rayner went up the road to his home. Ah! the comfort of that home he was so soon to leave seemed to strike him with greater force than it had ever done before. The scent of the lavender bushes was so sweet, and the porch, covered with its wealth of Ayrshire roses, looked so restful and pretty in the dim summer twilight. Within all was neat and bright. The bacon and beans had been kept hot for him, the teapot was on the hob in the back-kitchen, and though so late, the chil-

dren had waited for his return before beginning their meal.

Mrs. Rayner told the sad story of her losses in the poultry-yard for the twentieth time, but her son did not hear. He was conscious of nothing but the general neatness of that little cottage home, and of the fact that he was leaving it; and, what was far worse to bear, leaving Marjory—*his* Marjory, whose little loving thoughtful ways were so much more to him than any one guessed—were so inexpressibly precious.

When the meal was over, and Marjory and her grandmother had put away the things, and poor Ber had been helped up to his little room in the attic, Albert Rayner called Marjory to him in the garden where he was leaning on the gate, and said—

“My dear, I shall be off on Saturday. I’ve not dared to tell Grannie yet; but you’ll help to make it smooth.”

“Yes, father,” Marjory said, firmly; “I will do all I can.”

“I’m going to sell the ‘Marjory’ and the little

'Fairy,' and the nets and the tackle, and what they fetch must go into the bottomless well I'm a trying to fill up. I have promised to pay the cash down to that man, James Davies, before I sail; then"—he stopped.

"Then, father?"

"Why then, my dear, it'll be only a little money I can leave with Grannie, and I am afraid till I send you some of my wages—as I shall before long, please God—you'll find it rather tight work."

"We shall manage, father. I am strong and well, and I'll see Ber and Grannie have all they want."

"You see, my girl, with the fishing so bad, and the little jobs I did as carpenter failing since Jem Brookes opened his trade here last fall, I could never have done more than live from hand to mouth. As to paying this debt, I never could have paid it, if I'd scraped ever so. Your poor mother left Jesse to me when she died. *She* loved him, and when her dear mind was all in a confusion and clouded, she could still beg me to be kind to poor Jesse.

And so I have been, Marjory, for her sake ; but he has treated me very ill—fleece me, I may say, and altered the figure on that bill from a three to a five, making it fifty pounds instead of thirty."

"O father! it *is* hard for you ; but never mind. I am proud of you, and shall always be proud. Think how far, far worse it would be if my dear Daddy had done wrong instead of Uncle Jesse."

"Ah, my Marjory, but I am not too good. I am not like what I ought to be."

"Nobody is, father, but"—the child stopped—"God can make us all quite, quite different, if we will only go to Him."

Albert Rayner heaved a deep sigh.

"You must pray for me, little one, while I'm on the great sea. I like the thought of the voyage. I went twice to the West Indies before I married thy dear mother. I gave up the seafaring life to please her—she could not bear we should be parted. How happy we were in the cottage under the cliff for three years! It's all like a dream now. Well, now,

Marjory, you must do your best to keep on while I'm away. Don't let grandmother know anything about this money trouble, nor why I'm going. I shall just tell her I am in the way of earning more for you children, for there's poor Ber will never be able to do a stroke of work for himself. I'll send home some money the first opportunity, and so I hope you'll get through. It's unlucky that Mrs. Merivale is away so long this year and the Court shut up. Most likely, too, when she dies it will pass into other hands, and then Grannie may lose her berth at the Lodge, and the fowl trade may be stopped. Not but what I'm sick of the name of them fowls sometimes," and Albert in spite of himself laughed. "The old lady was crazed about the poultry, and my mother shared the craze. Stuffing up them clumsy cochins, and spending such lots of money on 'em. However, if the old missus dies, the birds will be sold and Grannie's heart will be pretty nigh broken. There! I feel lighter at heart now I've told you all. What's over and above the five pounds I have promised Davies I shall leave behind, and

what with the little that Grannie has, I think you'll tide on over the winter. In the spring, please God, you shall hear from me. I'll get you to put together a few things for my locker. I shall be in Castleton again to-morrow, for I mean to row the 'Marjory' down to port there; I think I know a man who'll buy her. Good luck ought to go with her, as she bears thy name."

Then Albert Rayner turned into the cottage, and Marjory mounted to her little attic next the one Ber occupied. She went in to look at him, as was her custom. He was asleep, and she withdrew again quietly to her own little bedroom. The small square window in the pointed roof admitted what air was stirring, and the blue sky above was studded with stars. Marjory knelt down on the steep bit of window ledge, to which she climbed with a spring from the ground, and told out all her cares and anxieties and fears to God.

The loss of her father was a very bitter one to her. How she would miss waiting for the sound of his heavy tread up the lane! How

she would long in vain for him in the dark winter evenings, when he sat in his own especial corner by the wide fireplace, mending his nets, or making new ones with a huge wooden needle and mesh, which her own slender fingers could hardly wield! Then the Sundays, when she sat by him in church, and touched him gently when sleep overcame him, and with a little repressed smile would point to the place in the Prayer-book, or the line of the hymn she was singing, and sign to him to follow. Then how sad it was that he should have to suffer for the fault of some one else, and leave his home and all he loved because another had proved false and deceitful! Presently Marjory became aware of voices below—her father's pitched somewhat high, and her grandmother's shrill and excited. She was evidently angry and surprised at her son's behaviour, and Marjory trembled as she listened to the conversation, which ended in a burst of crying from her grandmother and a soothing murmur from her father. At last her step was heard on the stairs, and then all was profound stillness.

But Marjory kept her position by the window long after the mantle of peace and calm had fallen over the cottage. She was making her plans for the future, in which self and her own interests had little share. She was praying that her father might be brought home safe and her grandmother comforted, and above all that she might do everything to make the burden lighter. A plan came into her head that she would offer herself at the school to help the mistress, Miss Birch, with her work for some part of the day, for Miss Birch's niece, who had lived with her, had been taken ill, and was gone back to her parents. Leaving her for a few hours every day was the great difficulty, but if she could make him see it was for Grannie's good and his own good in the end that she should save a little money, perhaps he might be brought to consent. And even as she thought of him, she heard his call, "Marjory, Marjory."

She was at his side in a moment, for the little attics were only divided by a thin boarded partition, and the least sound could be heard from one to the other.

"Yes, dear ; what is it ?"

"I can't go to sleep ; Marjory, it is so hot, and I heard father and grandmother quarrelling downstairs."

"Not quarrelling, dear ; only, I daresay, Grannie is sad because father is going to sea for a voyage."

"Is he ? and will he leave us ?"

"Yes ; but he will come back again, Ber, and bring us more money perhaps, and some pretty things from China. Wouldn't you like one of those little boxes all inside each other, such as Captain Hume showed us one day ?"

"Yes ; but I want the glass bowl most," Ber said, with the persistence of a sick child.

"Now we must not talk any more. I'll fan you, and then you'll soon go to sleep. Don't twist and roll about ; you'll only feel the hotter—keep still."

"Take hold of my hand, and don't go away, Marjory."

She knelt down by the low bed, and fanned with one hand, while her brother held the other fast in his. Soon the fanning stopped, but

Ber held her hand tight. She was afraid of disturbing him by drawing it away, though she was very tired, and the heat of the weather made her languid. Her eyes gradually closed, and she fell asleep, her head resting upon the bed, his hand in hers. And not till the first faint token of the dawn came through the little window did she wake, stiff and unrested, to go back for an hour to her own bed, where she fell exhausted into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

THE "Marjory" was sold the next day, and the nets and tackle and the little "Fairy" were also disposed of. By Saturday Albert Rayner had settled all his business. He got a post-office order for five pounds, which was sent to James Davies, and deposited the rest in Marjory's hands.

"You see, child, there are some little comforts and things your Grannie may not think of getting for the poor boy. And mind you keep up your spirits, and let me find you blooming when I come back. Grannie is rather short in her temper sometimes, but she is a good soul, as you know."

Certainly Mrs. Rayner's temper did not improve under the presence of the real trouble

her son's departure caused her. She loved him with the jealous exacting love which some women bestow on their only sons. She was not cordially pleased when he married. And when his sorrow came, and she felt that he had come back to her, she was willing to take his children for his sake, and did her duty by them, as I have said. But it was a very different thing when he was gone and they were left behind. She grew sharp and cross to them; and the village people said Mrs. Rayner was as "sour as a green pippin."

She would not talk to Mrs. Sharpe the laundress, or Miss White, or the Vicar's sister, good, fat, comfortable Miss Bumpstead, about her trouble. She rather resented their inquiries, and that because she was conscious her son's sudden departure was the subject of remark. The little teacups of the world feel the storms of gossip as well as larger spheres; and a good deal of wonder and speculation went on in St. Chad's.

Miss White told how a strange man had come in with a swagger and a bounce, and

knocked a whole dozen of candles down, asking for Albert Rayner. Mrs. Sharpe told how she heard Rayner talking in an excited manner to a big smart man with a pin and red necktie that same day; and that they turned into the "Blue Boar" together, and that Rayner came out like a "kicked dog with its tail between its legs."

"There's something wrong, depend on it," Mrs. Sharpe declared. "Going off sudden like, and leaving his poor children, and one a cripple, to shift as they can. I never *did* think any good came of folk too high for their place."

"Well, I don't know as how you can say that of Albert Rayner," an old fisherman said, taking puffs of his short pipe between times. "I've known Rayner, man and boy, for thirty years, and he's always well-spoken and good-natured; a deal too good-natured sometimes, that's how it is. I for one ain't a going to speak against Rayner, and a nicer little lass than his Marjory never walked."

"The more shame to him for leaving her,"

said Mrs. Sharpe. "That poor cripple is enough to try the patience of fifty Jobs, and that child is his slave. Dear me! I believe it is coming on to rain again, and all my linen out—worse luck!" and Mrs. Sharpe scampered off, fuming and fretting, to her little drying-ground behind the cottage, and left the old fisherman to stump away to his home under the cliff.

The days were short now, and the autumn rain was falling from a dark leaden sky, which seemed to blot out the little light that was yet left. The housekeeper at the Court had been into Castleton for a day's shopping, and as she passed the lodge-gate she paused, for Marjory called her.

"A letter for you, Mrs. Blackley; the postman brought it this morning after you were gone to Castleton."

Mrs. Blackley took the letter from Marjory's hand and said—

"I wonder if you'd mind carrying up my basket to the house for me; I'm so tired out, and it's heavy. How's your brother to-day?"

"He's been in a good deal of pain, thank you,

ma'am," Marjory said, "but he has dropped off to sleep, so I can come, and welcome. I'll just put on my cloak, for it's beginning to rain."

"Will you please to sit down, Mrs. Blackley," Mrs. Rayner said, coming out of the cottage. "If you want any eggs up at the house, I've half a dozen of the black Spanish, though they are getting scarce now."

"Thank you, Mrs. Rayner; I'll take them and welcome."

"When do you expect the mistress down here, Mrs. Blackley?"

"Well, I should not wonder if this letter is to say she is coming down. She is later than usual this year, and the last letter I had from Miss Stock, the maid, seemed to say she wasn't much better. I have not got my glasses with me, so I can't read the letter now; but if there's any news, I will let you know when the child comes back."

Marjory was ready now in her grey duffle cloak and hood bound with scarlet, which had been a present the Christmas before from Mrs. Merivale to all the school. She took up Mrs.

Blackley's basket, and asking her grandmother to give Ber some tea if he woke before she returned, she went out into the dark wet evening. The wind moaned sadly in the branches of the Scotch firs, and the cold chill air made Mrs. Blackley pant and gasp as she went up the avenue, which was somewhat steep the first part of the way.

Marjory found her companion disinclined to talk, and the walk was for the most part silent. Jock had followed his little mistress, and kept close behind her, sometimes making his presence known by rubbing his nose against her hand. Jock had a natural enemy at the Court, who, as they reached the side-entrance, was not slow to make his coming the subject of a long series of short sharp barks, to which Jock replied by low suppressed growls.

"I hope Mufti is tied up, Mrs. Blackley," Marjory said, "for Jock and he always fight."

But even as she spoke, down came the little bustling Skye terrier, snapping and barking, and making himself generally disagreeable.

Mrs. Blackley, however, took summary mea-

sures to prevent a pitched battle by dealing heavy blows right and left with her stout umbrella, which she put down by the porch leading into the kitchen of St. Chad's Court.

Mr. Adams, the gardener, a sour, reserved man, was seated by the fire in the kitchen, and the servant who did the little household work necessary at the Court when uninhabited was writing a letter at the table, for which she was called to order by Mrs. Blackley. It took some time for the worthy housekeeper to prepare to read her letter; her spectacles had to be wiped and adjusted, her bonnet untied, her large ample cloak taken off. At last Mrs. Blackley was ready, and after a close examination of the envelope, the postmark, and the writing, Mrs. Blackley broke the seal, and carefully and slowly perused its contents. It fell from her hand with an exclamation of consternation, then looking round on those assembled, she said, "The mistress is dead!"

There was a pause, and then Mr. Adams asked, "When was it?"

Mrs. Blackley pointed to the letter as it lay

at her feet, and said, "Read for yourself, Mr. Adams. I'm that shook and upset, I can scarcely see what Miss Stock says."

Mr. Adams did as he was told, and then he rose from his seat and said, in his slow deliberate Scotch fashion, "We shall all have to budge I expect. The place will be sold, and there'll be an end to fowls and birds for your Gran-nie, child; you'd better be going home to tell her the news, eh!"

"Yes, that's true; and mind you keep Jock to himself going down the lane. Deary me, it comes sudden like, though. I said times and times the mistress was failing. She never has been the same since Mr. Frank died—never! Lor me! if there was a son to come into the place, how different it would be!"

Marjory listened silently to all that was said. In her tender heart there was a feeling of sympathy for the sad lonely lady. Though old and feeble, she had gone the round of the poultry-houses a few days before she left St. Chad's for London in the spring, and had said to her grandmother that she thought she should get

rid of a good many of the fowls, for she was not strong enough to come down and see them as she had once done. And now she was dead, and there was no one to be very sorry, no one to miss her very much, no child to cry, as she should cry if she lost her father! Then came the thought of what the consequences would be to her and Ber, if her Grannie had to leave the home of so many years, and lose her place as lodge-keeper.

In the wind and rain of the chill dark evening Marjory ran quickly towards home, Jock trotting by her side, and magnanimously refusing to take any notice of Mufti's distant barks. There was a bright light in the Lodge as Marjory drew near, and she saw her grandmother sitting by the fire knitting vigorously.

"You have been a pretty long time, child; what have you been about? Ber has been so cross and whiny-piny, I have not known what to do."

"I am *not* cross and whiny-piny; only you tease and worry me till I wish I was dead when Marjory isn't here, that I do!"

"Hush! Ber, dear, hush! I have heard sad news, grandmother, up at the Court. Mrs. Merivale is dead."

Mrs. Rayner started from her seat exclaiming—

"Dead! then whatever will become of me?"

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVE THAT ABIDETH.

THERE are some people who grow loving and tender in time of trouble; there are others who withdraw themselves from sympathy, and are hard and cold and bitter. They can find no comfort for themselves; they know nothing of the balm in Gilead, or the great Physician there; so their wound is unhealed, and their hidden pain is sore and continuous, borne about day by day as a burden too grievous and intolerable, hopelessly and sullenly to the end.

Mrs. Rayner was one of these people. The loss of her son was a bitter trial to her, and now it was followed by the breaking up of the home of years, and the loss of the constant interest and occupation which the poultry gave her.

For St. Chad's Court was put up for sale and found no purchaser. Mr. Merivale's man of business and executor gave orders for the immediate sale of the live stock, and Mrs. Rayner was told that she must quit the Lodge at Christmas. A small legacy of ten pounds was paid her, and then her connection with St. Chad's Court was severed.

Mrs. Blackley and Mr. Adams were also dismissed. The housekeeper went to live with a niece in London, while the gardener got a situation in the family of a nobleman in a distant county.

All through these sad months Mrs. Rayner went about with a hard stern face, and Marjory dared not offer her any sympathy. She was always repulsed if she attempted it. And her grandmother treated her as child, and would not consult her as to what it was best for them to do.

It was one bleak November afternoon when Marjory met Miss Bumpstead at the Vicarage, who stopped her, and kindly asked what her grandmother's plans were.

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't know," Marjory said, in a sad heavy voice. "Sometimes she talks of going to live in London. But I am sure I don't know what she means to do there. And Ber would die, I know he would—he could never bear the journey."

"When do you expect to hear from your father, my dear?" said Miss Bumpstead. "Come in and rest a bit by the fire. You look pinched and cold."

The sympathy was sweet to Marjory, and she had great difficulty in repressing her tears.

"You don't look well, child," the Vicar's sister said. "What is wrong?"

"Oh, nothing is wrong with me, ma'am; only I have a great hungry feeling about father. I do want him so. And if he had not gone away, this would have been nothing."

"It is a great pity that he did go," said Miss Bumpstead, bluntly. "A great pity. And I must say I think it was a selfish act of his."

"Oh, no, ma'am, please, do not say that. Father is so good—he is indeed." But Marjory stopped; for had not her father ordered

her not to tell any one of the money trouble, which had really been the cause of his going away. "Father did it for the best, ma'am; and you see he could not tell that Mrs. Merivale would die so soon and we should be turned out of our house. I think grandmother keeps on hoping that the Court will be bought, and then perhaps the next gentleman or lady would let her stay on at the Lodge. But I don't think there's much chance of that."

"Well, I wish I could help you, Marjory," Miss Bumpstead said. "If you could leave your brother, I would soon make a nice little maid of you. And, indeed, if nothing turns up before Christmas, I think it would be better for you to go to service"——

"And leave Ber! Oh, no, ma'am, thank you. I must never leave Ber. I will work hard, and I will try to keep on till father comes home, but I must not leave Ber!"

The sweet pale face flushed crimson as Marjory spoke, and her gentian-coloured eyes were filled with tears.

"Well, you are a good sister to that poor

boy, and you will have your reward ; but I must speak to your grandmother, and try if I can get anything out of her. But, as you know, she is not a person to tell any one her troubles."

"No, that she isn't, ma'am. I often wish she would let me say I was sorry for her, but she won't. When the fowls were taken off to Bath and London, and not one left but the two old golden Hamburgs, I shall never forget grandmother's face. And when the time came in the evening for her to get the meal and go the round of the houses, she was just taking up her sun-bonnet to go out, when she remembered it was no use, and she sat down again, looking so miserable. Another thing that troubles me is"—Marjory's voice faltered—"that she does not seem to care much for Ber, and thinks it would be a mercy if God took him. But oh ! if He will only leave me Ber, *I* can bear anything, I think !"

Miss Bumpstead's eyes filled with sympathetic tears, but she was a matter-of-fact practical person, and she said nothing in answer to

this, but left Marjory by the fire and went into her own little room, where she kept all her stores for the village, dispensed her coal and meat tickets, and broths and soups, and in a few minutes she returned with a basket filled with nourishing things for the sick deformed boy who was so dear to Marjory's heart.

"And mind, you are to eat some of the meat-jelly yourself, Marjory," Miss Bumpstead said; "and you are not to starve yourself for the sake of Ber or anybody else, do you hear? I shall have a talk with the Vicar about you, and I must see Miss Birch again. You have been helping her at the school, have you not?"

"Yes, ma'am; I am down there every morning early to light the fires and clean up, and sometimes I go again in the evening."

"So you are on foot pretty well all day. No wonder you are as thin as a rod. Well, good-bye, my child. I have just had down from London some pretty texts and verses. See, here is one that will suit you—'Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall

reap if we faint not.' The flowers are pretty round the words, are they not?"

"They are *beautiful*," Marjory said emphatically, "and the words are more beautiful still. I could not get on sometimes, ma'am, if"—

"If what, my dear?"

"If I did not feel that the Lord loved *me*, and will take care of me and Ber, and that He will bring back father again."

"Ah, child, child!" said Miss Bumpstead, "you have got hold of the real source of happiness, God bless you!"

"I met Rayner's little girl, Marjory, to-day, Dorothy," the Vicar said that evening. "The child looks very pale and thin; what are they living upon now Rayner is away?"

"Little enough, I expect," Miss Bumpstead said; "but Mrs. Rayner is not a person of whom we can ask questions; she is a very proud old woman."

"*Very*," said the Vicar, "and a very disagreeable one too. I dislike mysterious people, and I don't feel satisfied about Rayner going off like that, leaving his children and his old

mother to get on as they can. Have they heard from him?"

"No, and they don't expect to do so till the spring. If Mrs. Merivale had not died, their position would not have been so bad, but they will have to turn out of the Lodge at Christmas, and I am sure I do not know where they are to go."

"Humph!" said the Vicar. "From what I hear in the village, Rayner's going away is thought to have some connection with some not very creditable transactions. However, I wish we could help that sweet pretty child, Marjory. Cannot you find her a place in some nice family?"

"Of course I could do so, and would gladly recommend her, but nothing would tempt her to leave that poor boy."

"If it pleased God to take him," the Vicar said, "it would be a relief to the boy himself and everybody else, though I ought hardly to say so," Mr. Bumpstead exclaimed, checking himself, "for no doubt that poor child has his mission in this world. Anyhow, he calls forth

the most beautiful example of unselfishness in his sister I ever saw or hope to see."

Marjory reached home with a lighter heart than she had left it, and those who pitied her for all the care and pains her crippled brother brought upon her would have thought their pity thrown away if they had seen the bright happy smile on her face as Ber said—

"I have been better to-day, Marjory, and I have been sitting up ever since you went; and look!"

He held up some paper figures of horses and dogs he had cut out with his thin fingers, and looked eagerly for his sister's admiration.

"O Ber! they are beautifully done. This horse is splendid, and how well it stands! I am so glad you are better. Look at this lovely tart and all that is in the basket, and everything is for you!"

Ber's large hazel eyes glistened as Marjory unpacked her treasures one by one, and he nibbled at a crisp biscuit with evident relish.

"Where's Grannie, Ber?"

"She is gone down to the village. She has

been writing a letter, Marjory. You never saw the time she was writing, and I don't believe any one will be able to read it now it is written."

"O Ber! Well, now, I will just put the kettle on and clear out the fire, and shan't I cut a little slice of the meat-jelly for Grannie, Ber!"

"Yes, and for yourself too, Marjory."

Marjory nodded, but meat-jelly was far too precious to be eaten by her, she thought.

Then, when everything was ready for supper, Marjory sat down by her brother, who wound his arm round her neck and rested his head against her shoulder.

"What are we going to do, Marjory? I mean, when we leave this house."

"I don't know, dear, but God will take care of us."

"Mrs. Sharpe came to see Grannie this afternoon, and I heard what they were talking about. Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, that is, if they *knew* you heard them—I mean, if they were not talking secrets."

"Well, they knew I was lying here, of

course—I always am. One thing Mrs. Sharpe said I did not like at all. She said father had no business to go away and desert us, and that there was something wrong. *Is there anything wrong, Marjory?* ”

“No, dear, nothing wrong about father. He went away hoping to get a great deal more money than he could do at St. Chad’s; but of course if we could have told that the mistress was going to die, and grandmother would lose her place, I don’t think he would have gone.”

“Then Mrs. Sharpe said something else, Marjory, which I know is not true; that you were ill, and the people in the village said you got thinner every day. That is *not* true is it?”

“No,” and Marjory laughed. “I am very well, Ber. Everybody gets thin when they grow fast. Jessie Barker is just as thin as I am, and she is very tall for twelve.”

“O Marjory, Marjory!” Ber said suddenly. “If I only could get well and work, and do something to help! I know Grannie would be glad if I was dead, and I know I am nasty and

cross, and I know *only* you can put up with me; but it is hard to feel I am a boy, and ought to be working and getting on, and that I have to lie or sit here, and be no more use than old Jock."

Apparently Jock, who was lying full length before the low bright fire, considered this speech of Ber's an insult. He rose from his dream of impossible rabbits and the yapping curs to whom he sometimes found it necessary to teach better manners, and came up to Ber's chair, thrusting his cold nose between the children's hands as they were clasped together.

"Poor Jock! dear, dear old Jock!" Marjory said. "You are of great use—have been of great use," she added, with a sigh; "for who would dare to touch father's nets or things on the beach when you were by?"

Marjory bent down and fondled poor Jock, who, satisfied that his honour was vindicated, lounged back to the fire.

"And you, Ber, aren't *you* of use? Ber, dear, I don't know how I could live without you,

though God would teach me, I know, to do that, as He teaches and helps me to do everything ; but O Ber ! you are all I have for my very own now, and while I keep you, nothing is too hard."

Oh ! beautiful is Christ-like love like this—the love that hungers to bless—the love which lives in the hearts of God's children as it cannot live elsewhere ! A flower sweet in its fragrance and delicate in its beauty, and yet firm and steadfast, because its root is deep in the heart of Him who so loved us.

CHAPTER VI.

ONLY A DOG.

RS. RAYNER was even more silent and depressed for some days after the evening when, according to Ber's account, she had with much pain and difficulty written a letter which she had taken down to the post-office herself, and to which she made no reference. Marjory noticed, however, that every morning she was restless and uneasy till the latest hour at which the postman could arrive was over, and that she spent much of her time upstairs, apparently turning out drawers, and a large cupboard in the roof, where a good many of her son's possessions had been stowed away when the two households were united. At last, one morning the postman's heavy tread was heard as he

swung the large gate back behind him, and Mrs. Rayner came forward to snatch the letter from his hand.

"Father! Oh, is it from father?"

"No, no, my dearie," said the old postman, with whom Marjory was a great favourite.

"No, no; this ain't a furrin letter, I'll answer for it. I wish it were, for thy sake, I am sure; but don't go for to pine and fret. Father is all right, and will be back here at St. Chad's afore another year is out, with a lot of money p'raps."

The postman stumped away, and Marjory, turning into the cottage, saw her grandmother trying to spell out the contents of her letter. Marjory felt curious to know what was in the letter, but was afraid to ask. Mrs. Rayner stuffed it into the capacious pocket of her large holland apron, and said nothing then. But that afternoon she was again at her writing, and was preparing to leave the cottage, when Marjory, who was at home, and busy drying a few things that had been washed up that week, said, "Grannie, it's very cold and dark; let me take the letter for you—do!"

Mrs. Rayner hesitated a moment, and then said, not very graciously, "Take it, then, and make haste."

She put the letter into Marjory's hands, but the ink not being dry, there was a smudge made over the address.

"There ! see what you have done with your carelessness ! Now it can't go."

"I have got an envelope, Grannie," Ber said from his corner, "in the writing-case Miss Bumpstead gave me, and then Marjory can direct it for you clear and straight."

"Well, it's lucky the stamp was not on it," Mrs. Rayner said ; "if it had been, you should have paid for it ; but as luck would have it, I was going to buy a stamp at the post-office. Now, then, write what I tell you," for the letter was transferred into the fresh envelope, and Marjory seated herself with great gravity to address it—

MRS. GRIMSBY,
108 ROSEMARY PLACE,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON.

The clear round-text hand left no room to doubt that this time Mrs. Grimsby would receive her letter, and when it was carefully pressed by Ber in his blotting-case with some pride, Marjory set off with it.

"Put on my comforter, Marjory!" Ber said; "it's very cold."

She returned to take it from him with a loving kiss, and Mrs. Rayner said, more kindly, "Then I'll get tea ready, and finish up your work for you, and when you come back I'll tell you who Mrs. Grimsby is."

So when Marjory had performed her mission to the post, and the tea things were washed up and everything put tidy, Mrs. Rayner fulfilled her promise.

"Mrs. Grimsby," she said, "is a great-niece of your grandfather's, and is therefore a relation of yours, children. We can't go on living here in St. Chad's, turned out of house and home, and no money coming in from your father. So I have made up my mind to go and live in London. Kezia Grimsby is a widow, and keeps a large shop of groceries and provisions; she has

no family, and lets out her house to lodgers. She offers me two rooms if I like to have them, and furnish them with what things I have. I am to look after her lodgers, cook and clean up, and you, Marjory, are to help in the shop. She will give us our board and the empty rooms for this, and I call it a good offer. Anyhow, good or bad, I have written to say I'll close with it; its better than being looked down upon here, and scoffed at as we are. We must begin to get things ready at once, for there ain't many weeks to Christmas. I am going to get the things sent by sea from Castleton, which will cost less, and the sooner we are off the better."

"But Ber, Grannie; think of Ber. How will he ever get through the journey? And must we leave Jock behind, and never see St. Chad's again? Pray, pray, don't let us go, Grannie;" and Marjory, generally so brave and cheerful, broke down and cried bitterly.

"If you want to starve, you and Ber may stay here. I am off as soon as I can, and I don't know that I need say any more."

"But, Grannie, dear Grannie!" Marjory began.

Mrs. Rayner took no notice of either of the children, and went upstairs to bed without another word.

To Marjory's great surprise, Ber, on whom all her care and thought centred, did not seem so much disturbed at the thought of the change. Indeed, he rather liked the idea, and made light of Marjory's fears about the journey.

Poor Ber! he little knew what was before him, and it was well he did not.

Mrs. Rayner held obstinately to her determination, resisted all interference from Miss Bumpstead, Miss White, or the kind school-mistress Miss Birch, who was so much attached to Marjory.

Mrs. Rayner said she was turned out of house and home, and her savings would not keep herself and the children till her son sent some remittance.

She had made up her mind, and was not going to unmake it for fifty Miss Bumpsteads. Seeing the thing was inevitable, Marjory's

friends did their best to help her, and an unexpected offer from the captain of the ship that was to take the furniture seemed too good to refuse. He had known Albert Rayner, and was prepared to take his children free of cost with the furniture, except for what food they might have on the way, for which they could pay his wife. Considering poor Ber's pain when he had to take any exercise, the length of the journey and the hard seats of the third-class carriage, Miss Bumpstead and the Vicar thought the Captain's offer should be accepted, and Mrs. Rayner was to precede them to London, and be down at the wharf to receive them and her worldly goods on their arrival.

Marjory and Ber slept at the schoolhouse on the night of their grandmother's departure, and it was touching to see how all the village tried to prove their love for Rayner's little Marjory by kindly deeds and words.

Jock was received by one of the fishermen, who promised to treat him kindly. Another volunteered to row the children to Castleton

port, where the ship which was to take them to London was lying.

Miss White packed up a little basket with provisions, and a great effort it was for her to part with even a slice of her dark-coloured cake without seeing its equivalent in a substantial piece of money.

Mrs. Sharpe got up all the clothes for the children the last week free of charge, and told them she had put in some sprigs of dry rosemary and lavender, as London was not a very "sweet" place, and they would like to smell something to remind them of home when they put on the clean things on Sunday.

"We shall have plenty of rosemary," Ber said, "though its very kind of you, Mrs. Sharpe. Our house is called Rosemary Place."

Mrs. Sharpe shook her head. "Ah, my dear, don't you expect rosemary bushes to grow in London streets, or you will be disappointed, bless you!"

Miss Bumpstead offered to take poor Ber down the cliff path to the beach in her wheel-chair. And propped up with cushions and

shawls, the poor child began his journey to the great unknown world of London. Those who saw it never forgot the white sad face of Marjory as she walked by the chair down the familiar village street for the last time, Jock following, and knowing something was very serious, but feeling sure, whatever it was, *his* presence must be a comfort. The winter sun was struggling through the mist as Ber was lifted into the boat by strong kindly hands, and a group on the shore was gathered to bid both children good-bye. Marjory turned back once to throw her arms round Jock and bury her face in his shaggy coat. But Jock had no intention of being left behind; he struggled to free himself from her clasp and leaped into the boat.

"Call him back, my dear, call him back," the sailor said; "he'll splash your brother and wet him to the skin afore we are started."

"Come back, Jock," Marjory cried, as she stood on the bank of shingle. "Come back; you must stay behind, Jock. Look!" and she took from her neck a knitted comforter and

spread it on the beach. "See, dear Jock, lie down and take care of it for me."

The dog looked up wistfully into the child's face and gave a low whine.

"Yes, Jock, lie down there; take care of it,



Jock." A great sob nearly choked the last words. "Good-bye, Jock; you will see father soon. Good-bye!" Then, with a great effort of self-control, she allowed herself to be lifted into the boat, and smiled through her tears at the lookers-on; while faithful Jock dragged

the white comforter with his teeth to a place of safety, and lay down upon it, keeping his eye on the receding boat till it was lost to sight behind St. Chad's Pillar. The village folk turned away, and wound slowly and sadly up the cliff path.

"We'll never see the poor cripple again," Mrs. Sharpe said. "The move will kill him. I have no common patience with a man like Rayner deserting his own flesh and blood like this, snatching at a good offer as he did, and never troubling himself what became of his children."

"No; it's a crying shame," said another, "and he'll live to repent it."

"If I ain't mistaken, he'll never see either of them children again. Marjory was the apple of his eye. And he'll lose her—that's my belief—and serve him right."

"Don't judge like that," Miss Birch said; "Rayner is too well known here, and too highly respected for us to sit in such sharp judgment on him. If we love Marjory, we must not speak against her father, that would grieve

and hurt her more than anything. We must try to remember that."

"Well spoken, mum," said the kind old fisherman who had agreed to take charge of Jock. "Albert Rayner had some good reason for cutting his cable, you may rely on it: I am certain of it. And it's a real pleasure to me to take care of that poor dumb animal for his sake as well as Marjory's. Lor! I could have cried like a baby when the child took off her comforter and gave it to the dog to keep. It was almost more than I could bear, and so I tell you; while I've a crumb left Jock shall share it."

The old sailor's hospitality to Jock was not to be long tried. Whether it was that the dog was old and his best days were over, I know not. Certain it is that nothing would induce him to leave the beach where his little mistress had said her last good-bye. Nothing would induce him to give up the little white comforter which she had committed to his care. Day after day passed—there was storm and calm, sunshine and rain—but Jock did not de-

sert his post. The village boys and girls took him food and water by the old sailor's desire. He was coaxed and tempted to eat, but in vain. He grew thinner and thinner and but the ghost of his former self. One afternoon, late, just after Christmas, two of the school-girls met Jock coming up the cliff path. They called to him, and tried to stroke him, but he growled ominously. And they saw he had something white in his mouth hanging from it.

It was Jock's last walk. When the postman went up the hill past St. Chad's Court the next morning, he saw lying on the door-step of the deserted Lodge the faithful dog, stiff and cold and dead, the fragments of Marjory's comforter still within his clenched teeth. And so he died as he had lived, true and loyal to those whom he loved and served.

Poor Jock !

CHAPTER VII.

LOST MARJORY.

THE "Dolphin," laden with the stones of a quarry between St. Chad's and Castle-ton, made a good voyage, and Marjory and Ber were comparatively happy. The novelty of all they saw delighted them, and Ber forgot his pain in the honour of sleeping in a real hammock, into which the captain lifted him; and where, he told Marjory, he slept better than in his bed at home.

In the daytime he lay on deck upon a rough couch made of sacks and straw; and about two o'clock on the third day, after a very prosperous calm sail, the little schooner entered the mouth of the Thames, and went up the broad river with many stately ships from distant countries, with all their varied flags flying; and on board

some of these ships were those who were drawing near home after an absence of years.

"Isn't this nice, Marjory?" Ber said, as Marjory sat down on the deck by her brother's side. "Why, the journey you thought would have been so bad for me, has been the best part of all. I wish it would last a month. If this is London, this is beautiful. Look at those grand houses and gardens, grander than the Court—far grander and better."

The twilight deepened as the "Dolphin" neared London, and Marjory saw a dark black cloud before them, which was fringed at the edge with deep carmine, fading away to pink and to the blue-grey above where Venus was lighting her silver lamp over the great city, where the tide of human life was surging in one resistless, ceaseless current.

"That's London smoke," the captain said. "I daresay they have had a dark foggy day in the city; its sure to be dark when we arrive. Have you got all your little goods and chattels together, children? The big goods are all in the hold, and your grandmother said she would

send down to the Docks for them in the morning."

"We are so much obliged to you, sir, for bringing us," Marjory said. "We have liked the sail so much."

"Two born sailors! as your father's children ought to be. But the Channel isn't always like a duck-pond, I can tell you. You would not like a squall, would you now?"

"I don't think I should mind," said Ber: "I love the sea."

"Poor little chap! How old are you?"

"Thirteen, sir," Marjory said, "and I am eleven and a half."

"Dear bless me! why, he ain't up to your shoulder, is he? Well, well! little and good, they say."

Marjory pressed closer to Ber, and gave his hand a little squeeze of sympathy.

"Now, young ones," the captain said, "there'll be a great row and bustle at the Docks. I'll try and sight your grandmother, and the moment I give the sign, you come up to the bridge, and I'll carry the boy over."

"Please, sir," Marjory said, "we haven't paid anything."

"Ah, well, never mind; there's nothing to pay. My missus says you have not eaten more than two sparrows. Now look alive—there!"

The little schooner made her way gallantly and cleverly through the bewildering maze at the Victoria Docks of larger and smaller craft, where she was quite unnoticed.

The noise increased with the darkness, and though thousands of lights twinkled on all sides, they only seemed to make the murky blackness of the winter's evening blacker.

"What a lot of people, Marjory!" Ber said, "and how they are all shouting and talking! and oh! what rows upon rows of lights! How shall we ever see Grannie? I hope we shan't be lost."

"Keep quite quiet, dear Ber, as the captain told us; don't be frightened. I wish it was daylight though, but don't you be frightened."

"My back begins to ache dreadful, Marjory; I wish I was in the hammock again."

"You'll soon be in bed, I hope. We have got

to London now, but I don't know where Rosemary Place is. I daresay close by; I hope so."

Alas, dear Marjory! she was not near Rosemary Place, and the great city had no home for her.

A sense of desolation came over her as she strained her eyes to try and distinguish people on the landing-stage. The ropes were at last thrown out, and with much scraping and bumping the "Dolphin" was brought-to, and the captain went to the portway and looked at the faces to be seen there. Two large vessels with a good many passengers were brought-to, close to the "Dolphin" on either side of her, and there was a considerable crowd, and much hallooing and shouting, and calling from one to another all along the landing-stage. At last Captain Smith said—

"There's the old lady, and a man with her. So much the better. Here, then, Mrs. Rayner! I've got your children safe to port, and all your goods are below."

The captain's sonorous voice rang out clearly and distinctly, but poor Mrs. Rayner's

rejoinder was no more heard than if it had been the squeak of a mouse. The man who was with Mrs. Rayner, one of Mrs. Grimsby's shopmen, called out that the goods were to be left till the next morning, and the children were to come as quick as they could.

The captain threw out the carpet-bag and small parcel which contained all Marjory and Ber's worldly possessions, and then lifting the boy in his arms, he gave him to the man, and told Marjory to keep close behind. Bewildered and confused, Marjory stepped unevenly along the plank, and caught her grandmother's hand at the end.

"There! you are loose from your moorings now, poor little things!" Captain Smith said. "A mad freak of the old lady's to come to London; better have bided quiet where she was."

Mrs. Rayner was jostled and pushed about as she had never been in her life before, while Marjory kept close behind her, with her eyes strained not to lose sight of her brother, who was in the man's arms. There was a somewhat

unusual crowd and bustle at the Docks that evening, for a report had got about that there had been a mutiny on board one of the brigs homeward bound from the Azores, and there was a press and rush to see the men brought off by the policemen. Presently, Marjory became conscious that the crowd was thickening; she had lost sight of Ber, and the woman just in front of her was not Grannie. She struggled on, but at the point at which the narrow alley led into the street where cabs were waiting to take passengers to the station, there was a lock in the crowd caused by a man falling down in a state of drunkenness. Before he could be lifted up and the people moved on again some minutes had elapsed, and when at last Marjory reached the opening to the street, she could see nothing of her grandmother. She asked several people to help her, but no one took any notice of her; then she began to run as fast as the slimy state of the pavements allowed her; but alas! every step she took was in the direction that led her away from the place where Ber was waiting with Mrs.

Rayner, while the shopman had retraced his steps down to the landing-stage to try and find the child. On ran Marjory for some time; then she turned back, turned again, grew more and more confused and frightened, and at last succeeded in attracting the attention of a man who was looking into a shop at the "Police News." She pulled his coat several times, and he looked down at last.

"Picking my pocket, eh? I caught you!"

"Oh, sir! I have lost my way. I don't know where I am or what to do. Could you tell me if I am near Rosemary Place, Plaistow?"

"No, I can't; and I should say you had better do something else than roam about the streets of an evening;" and the man passed out of sight.

Marjory's heart beat, and she felt inclined to sit down and cry. But suddenly she remembered she was not forsaken or left quite alone. High above a church steeple she caught sight of the same beautiful planet she and Ber had looked at as they sailed up the river, and her thoughts went up to God, whose love seemed

to shine on her above the toiling crowd and the noise and bustle, and calm her with its influence, just as that beautiful star shone upon the wet, miry streets, and ragged, miserable-looking people who thronged them. "Dear Lord," Marjory said, "I am all alone in London, and I do not know where to go; please help me, and let me—oh, let me find Ber!"

Then she pictured Ber's distress, his pain unsoothed in the new bed in Rosemary Place, no one to rub his back, no one to sing him to sleep, no one to be kind to him; for Grannie would be cross and anxious about her, and oh! what *would* poor Ber do?

Marjory turned to retrace her steps, thinking it was possible that she might find her way back to the "Dolphin" and kind Captain Smith. She paused to collect her energies, when, under the gas lamp on the opposite side of the street, she thought she caught sight of her grandmother. Surely that was the black shawl with the coloured border Mrs. Merivale had given her. She rushed across between cabs and carts, and narrowly escaped being knocked

down, and eagerly called "Grannie!" The woman turned, and then Marjory saw she was mistaken, and that it was not Mrs. Rayner.

"Oh!" she said, in her sweet silvery voice, which had a tuneful sound in it, very different to that of the voices round her,—“Oh! ma'am, I have lost my way. I want to get to Rosemary Place, Plaistow; will you show me the way?”

The woman looked earnestly at Marjory, examining the beautiful delicate outline of her face and the lovely gentian eyes, shaded with those long curled lashes. She looked at her, and measured her height with her eye, and then said—

“Wait a bit, my dear; I'll help you if you'll stay a moment till my husband comes out of that shop.”

“Oh! thank you, ma'am,” Marjory said. “Am I very far from Rosemary Place?”

“A goodish way. Where do you come from?” Marjory told her tale in a few simple words, and the woman took her hand. “Why, you must be tired and hungry, I'm sure. I'll take care of you.”



Alone in London.—Page 8r.

A man now joined them, and the woman spoke to him in a low voice.

"The very thing! She is as light as a feather and so pretty; she will make a stunning 'Beauty.'"

The man now surveyed Marjory in the same way the woman had done, from head to foot, and said, "Yes, as luck would have it, she *will* do."

"You come along with us, and we will see you get to Rosemary Place. It's ever so far off, you know; and I can't take you there to-night, but we will see about it to-morrow. I never heard tell of Plaistow; are you sure you've got hold of the right name?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure, ma'am. It's not far from the Docks where we came up in the 'Dolphin.' Oh, I do want to see Ber to-night, if I could."

The woman did not reply, but taking the child's hand, she followed the man to a station where he took some tickets, and they were soon travelling off in a crowded third-class carriage. They changed the railway several

times, and Marjory's companions were very silent. The woman bought her some buns, and at one station gave her a bottle of ginger-beer, and covered her with a cloak she carried on her arm.

At last they left the railway, and Marjory was taken through more streets and lanes, till they came to a row of houses, all looking exactly alike, and at the door of one the man fitted a latch-key into the lock, and turning up a jet of gas, led the way up a flight of dirty stairs to a room on the second floor.

"Well," growled an old man, who was sitting over the embers of a low fire, "what have you done?"

"Not a bad stroke of business—we have found *her*."

Meantime the woman had taken off Marjory's hat and jacket, and led her up to the fire, where the light from the gas fell on her.

"She looks all right, but how will she do?"

"There is not much to do; we'll soon break her in."

"You'd better make haste, then, for we are

advertised for the twentieth, and this is the fifteenth."

"We'll manage. Now, my dearie, you shall have your supper, and then you shall go to bed."

Marjory's large eyes dilated and the colour came to her face. "You promised to take me to my grandmother at Plaistow."

"Don't know such a place, as I told you," said the man; "and if I did, here you stay. You don't budge, my dear, for a good bit. We need a 'Beauty' for the pantomine at the Empress Theatre—you'll do to a T. If you behave well, and learn your part, and act well, then you'll have no cause to complain; but if you make any fuss or disturbance, why then *we'll* soon know how to deal with you. Now, go off to bed, and Mrs. Martini will bring you a hot dose, for you look as cold as charity. Now, do as you are bid."

"Don't be hard on her, Charles," said the woman. "Leave her to me."

Marjory was too stunned and confused to remonstrate. And scarcely knowing what to

fear or what to expect, she suffered herself to be taken to another room, where two small beds were standing against the wall.

"There ! here's a nice little night-dress for you," Mrs. Martini said. "Now, make haste and plait up your lovely hair—I never saw such hair—and I'll come back with a glass of hot wine and water to warm you."

Marjory sank down on her knees by the bed as the woman left the room, and cried with an exceeding bitter cry, "O Ber, Ber ! O father ! I am lost and miserable !"

CHAPTER VIII.

DOLLY.

ARJORY knelt by the bed till Mrs. Martini, as she was called, returned.

This time she spoke sharply to her, and bid her do as she was told—get into bed and drink what she had brought her with no fuss.

“Be thankful,” the woman said, “you ain’t wandering about the streets of London, and that bad folks have not got hold of you. You are safe here, and you have only to do as you are told.”

“I will do as you bid me,” the child said; “but oh, pray, take me back to my brother! He is ill, and can’t live without me. We have no mother—and we are everything to each other now father is gone.”

"Well, well! I'll see you go to your brother one day before long, if we can find out where he is; but as to Plaistow, you see you have made a mistake; there's no such place, and there may be fifty Rosemary Places in London."

Marjory resisted no longer. A feeling of hopelessness akin to despair came over her. She lay down, having first swallowed the hot stuff that was offered her; and, before she could think any more of her sorrow and desolation, a heavy sleep fell upon her. She awoke fancying she was in her own little bed at St. Chad's, and that Ber had crept up to hers, as he often did, to beg her to get him some milk or tea before the rest of the household was awake.

A child was standing by her side, but it was not Ber, and a little, pale, sad face was peering down at Marjory, while a small wan hand touched a lock of the golden hair lying on the pillow. Marjory started up. "Where am I?" she said.

"This is Mr. Nixon's house," the child said. "He has got the Empress Theatre for the season, and there is to be a grand pantomime of

'Beauty and the Beast.' Only 'Beauty' died all of a sudden the day before yesterday. She fell down the trap-door and broke her back, and they are so put out. Uncle went off yesterday with Mrs. Martini to look for another 'Beauty,' and I suppose they have got you. You are much prettier than our poor 'Beauty,' but I loved her, that I did. She was kind to me when uncle beat me;" and the small face puckered up into wrinkles while tears gathered in the child's eyes. "'Beauty' got so thin, like they all do; it's from being made to drink so much of that hot stuff. Poor 'Beauty!' I wish I had not seen her fall; she looked, oh, so dreadful! And yet she tried to smile on me, 'cause she and I was always friends—that we were—and she used to beg me to be good. You look good, but I wish you had not come here."

"I could not help it. I lost my way, and the woman who had a shawl like my grandmother's brought me here. What am I to do?"

"Oh, you'll be taken to the theatre to-day, and then you'll be shown all you are to do. You are to act 'Beauty,' and the 'Beast' is Jem

Carpenter ; he is a bad boy and swears awful. I do the chief fairy part, because I am so small, and they say I dance so well. I hate it, but it's no use hating it."

"How old are you ?" Marjory asked.

"I don't know—going in ten, I think, but I ain't sure. Mrs. Martini is Mr. Nixon's daughter, and she has married my uncle. Oh, he is just awful sometimes. Don't you make him angry."

"Who is awful ?" Marjory asked,

"Old Nixon. He was furious when 'Beauty' died, and said he was ruined. Now, if you fill the place up, he may be in a better temper."

Marjory now got up and washed and dressed, her new friend watching her with her old, hungry, pinched little face, from which every trace of happy innocent childhood had gone.

Oh, sweet and beautiful childhood ! Do we think as we ought how sadly it is wilfully marred and defaced every day, in the very heart of our own country, under the very shadow of our church towers, within the sound

of our chiming bells? Do we ever give a thought to the crowds of little prematurely aged children who crowd night after night the boards of the theatres for weeks before and after Christmas, dressed in their tawdry finery, the very semblance of modesty taken from them, breathing the tainted atmosphere which is as poison to the child-life which our Father in heaven counts dear?

There were large vulgar bills placarded over the walls of the district where the Empress Theatre was situated, in the lower part of Camberwell. These bills announced the new Christmas pantomime of "Beauty and the Beast." Who thought or knew of the little life that had been cut short, of the poor jaded little "Beauty" who had died on the very eve of the first performance? Who thought of the aching heart of the "Beauty" who took her place, the poor child who shrank with loathing from those around her, but was fast caught as in a web?

Albert Rayner's little Marjory! No one thought, for no one knew the details of the sad story. But, oh! believe me that there are

many such lying behind the fairy tale which is reproduced at the theatres of England year after year, not only in London, but in our provincial towns. Dazzled by the finery, tempted by the pay, the children and the children's parents flock to the managers for employment, and strain every nerve to obtain it. There is no thought at Christmas time so sad to me as that of those poor little ones going through the same dance and the same tricks in transformation scenes night after night, and returning tired and miserable to their squallid homes and their rags when the play is played out; while the children of the rich, who have been gazing at what seems to them a dream of splendour and magnificence, go to soft luxurious beds to think over the glories of the unreal world, where they have been living for an hour or two, and to find it in their hearts to envy the little graceful fairies who have been floating about like so many gaily painted butterflies before their eyes.

The natural grace and self-possession which belonged to Marjory made her a very promising

pupil. After the second rehearsal, the temper and spirits of old Mr. Nixon and the Martinis improved, and Marjory was in high favour. But she grew more and more miserable, and cried herself to sleep every night.

Still I would not have you think that the music of the heavenly chimes was altogether silent in her heart. Marjory held fast her trust in God, and prayed Him to keep her safe, and to take her out of all that was so wretched, and, as she felt, so sinful. For she heard bad words from almost every lip, she saw evil passions gaining the mastery over those about her; she heard children of her own age talking like men and women, and taking God's most holy name in vain.

But, in the midst of the darkness of her present position, there was one bright light. Dolly, from the moment when she had stood by the bed on the morning after her first arrival, had taken her to her heart. She had loved the last poor "Beauty," and now she clung to her successor. Marjory in her loneliness poured out her heart to this little waif and stray, who

was so childish and yet so unchild-like, so far more deeply versed in the ways of a sinful world than the child who had been brought up by the waves that murmur on St. Chad's Bay, and yet was so wholly ignorant of God, and all He had done for her.

The old, old story of the love of Jesus was told to poor Dolly by Marjory, who knew by heart many of the verses of that matchless song which so simply and so pathetically sets forth the fulness and simplicity of the Gospel message. On Sunday the children were left very much to themselves, and ordered to keep quiet and rest themselves. Mr. and Mrs. Martini went out, and old Mr. Nixon was busy with writing and accounts. Touching it was to see poor Marjory seated by the dusty window of their bedroom, through which the winter sunshine tried hard to struggle, with Dolly by her side, teaching her bit by bit the familiar hymn, and telling her of all God's love in Christ Jesus.

Then Dolly would look up from time to time, and say, with tearful eyes fixed on Mar-

jory, "I wish my poor Beauty could have heard all this. But she was good—she did try to be good; only she was never happy—never!"

Then Marjory told stories of her own free happy life at St. Chad's; of the sea, and Jock, and her father; of rowing in the boat with him on bright summer evenings; of the village schoolhouse covered with roses; of the fan-tailed pigeons and tumblers; of the crimson sea-anemones in their crystal pools. Dolly eagerly drank it all in, and made Marjory promise that if ever she got home and found Ber, she would not forget her, but let her see him too.

"Oh, if I thought I should ever get to him! But, Dolly, Dolly! I feel as if I never should."

"Write to him," Dolly suggested.

"Yes, I have thought of that hundreds of times; but I have no paper and no pen and no stamp; and then, if really there's no such place as Plaistow, why the letter would never get to Ber."

"Spect there *is* such a place as Plaistow;

'spect they only tell a lie to keep you. I know," Dolly said,—“I'll watch my time, and steal a stamp and some paper from old Nixy's table, and you shall write, and I'll take the letter to Jem Carpenter in the bosom of my frock, and he'll post it.”

“Oh, no, you must not steal, Dolly; that would grieve Jesus, you know, our best Friend; but if some one would give me a stamp and some paper and a pen and ink, I would try to get it posted, if only Plaistow is a real place.”

“I'll manage somehow,” Dolly said; “see if I don't.”

And Dolly did manage, but she was not quick enough to outwit those who were on the watch to prevent Marjory from having any communication with her friends. Little Dolly borrowed the paper and a pencil from Mrs. Smith, the woman who let the upper part of the house to Mr. Nixon. She slept with it under her pillow, and the next morning she was up watching for the daylight to break in through the gloom. Then she woke Marjory, and said, “Now is your time; here's the paper

and a stamp. I got one halfpenny of my own, and Mrs. Smith trusts me for the other. Make haste."

Marjory woke from dreams of home and Ber and her father to the reality of her life. This was the day of the first performance of "Beauty and the Beast," and all the misery of what she must go through came upon her with redoubled force. "O Dolly, Dolly! I can't write; its very kind of you, but it's no use."

"Nonsense," said Dolly, energetically; "you are half asleep. Do as I tell you."

Thus urged, Marjory complied, and, through showers of blinding tears, wrote—

"DEAR GRANDMOTHER,—I am very miserable. Pray come and find me and take me away. I love you and Ber so much. Tell Ber how I love him. I hope he is not worse. Dolly is very good to me.—Your affectionate grand-child,
MARJORY RAYNER."

Dolly watched the operation anxiously, she was so afraid the door should open and Mrs. Martini come in.

"Have you put where you are?"

"No, that I have not."

"Lor! fancy that now! Put—

101 BROOK STREET,
CAMBERWELL,
AT MR. NIXON'S.

There! make haste and direct it. How faint the pencil marks!—lick it, can't you?"

The envelope was at last addressed, and then Dolly buried it in a safe place, secure that she had served a friend. At the rehearsal that morning the precious letter was secretly conveyed to Jem Carpenter, and Dolly asked him to post it for her.

Jem Carpenter promised; but he had received a hint from the manager, and he knew better than to get into trouble with old Nixon and lose his place and his pay; so he took the letter and said, "All right!"

It was all wrong. On his way home he opened the envelope, read the rubbed, blurred contents as well as he could, and then tearing it up, threw it into the gutter. Not the

envelope, however; he carefully put that in hot water when he got home, and getting the stamp off, sold it to his brother, who worked at a shoemaker's, and so realised a penny by this transaction.

Alas for poor Marjory!

CHAPTER IX.

BER'S DESOLATION.

RS. RAYNER'S consternation when she found Marjory was missing was great. She knew well enough her son prized his little girl more than anything he possessed, and how should she meet him when he came home without Marjory. Were Miss Bumpstead, and Mrs. Sharpe, and the neighbours right after all, and would it have been better to bide her time in the quiet village of St. Chad's, instead of risking the chances of a new and untried life in London ?

"She must be found," Mrs. Rayner exclaimed when the man returned from his search on the landing-stage with no news of Marjory. "She must be found ; I don't stir till I see her."

"Well," said the man, "you'll have to pay a

pretty sum keeping the cab all this time, and it's coming on to rain. Here's a policeman; speak to him."

"Which way do you think she went?" the policeman asked, "and how long is it since you missed her?"

"A good half-hour, now," said the cabman, stamping his feet and performing a tattoo upon his chest. "A good half-hour; and, Lor bless you! you might as well hunt for a needle in a hayfield as for a child in these parts. There's allus such a press by the Docks at high-water, when the ships come up with the tide. Look 'ee, now!"

For another stream of people, more closely packed than former ones, now came up the narrow lane from the landing-stage, and the police were all busily employed watching the crowd, having their eyes on certain questionable characters they recognised.

After an hour had gone by, during which poor Ber was sobbing hopelessly in his corner of the cab, the shopman spoke with authority.

"Tell 'ee what, missus; I must go home, and

leave it to you whether you come or not. There's a lot of things waiting for me to do, and Mrs. Grimsby ain't a party to trifle with, and she ain't the very sweetest temper in the world, so I tell you."

"But *how* can I leave the child alone in the London streets? Let me come with you, policeman, and see if I can find her."

The policeman was a kind-hearted man, and touching another on the arm, said, "There's a child been lost in the crowd—a little girl."

"Oh, pray, pray, find Marjory!" a little quavering voice said from the cab, broken with tears and sobs. "Oh, pray, find her!"

"Well, well! nothing isn't really lost in these days," the policeman said in a consoling voice. "I tell you what, missus; you come along with us to the station-house, and we'll put up a description of the child, and I make no doubt we'll soon track her out. She ain't nowhere near at hand; you don't think she has moved away on purpose do you—back to the ship, p'raps?"

"No, no!" said Ber, in the fullest confi-

dence. "Marjory would never, never leave *me*. She is miserable, I know; she is as miserable as I am," and the boy's tears broke out afresh. "Oh! I wish we never had come."

"Be quiet, Ber," said Mrs. Rayner, sharply, not the less sharply because she was echoing the same wish in her secret heart. "Be quiet, Ber; as if crying would do any good. Well, we must go the station, I suppose."

The policeman mounted the box by the cabman, and they rumbled and jolted off, poor Ber's bodily pain being now so great, that the sense of Marjory's loss grew less for the time. Only for the time. I have no words to tell what misery the poor boy suffered that night; how forlorn and desolate he felt in the corner of the large cold room where Mrs. Grimsby had made up two small beds on the floor for himself and Marjory till their luggage could be available; how he lay awake there, counting the strokes of a church clock near, and starting at every unusual noise. The pictures of all the terrible accidents that might have befallen Marjory floated before his wide-open eyes.

She was run over perhaps, and had been taken to hospital, as Mrs. Grimsby had suggested in her hard voice; or she had been kidnapped by some designing person; or she had been killed outright, and he should never see her more. Oh! this was the most terrible thought of all! He was so dependent on his sister for everything; she was, as the village people said at St. Chad's, "quite his little mother," though two years younger, and Ber looked to her for everything.

Where, where was Marjory? If only he had her, what would the pain be? What would it signify that Mrs. Grimsby was so cross and disagreeable, and called him, so that every one could hear, "The poor little cripple," as he had tried to sit at the table, which was too high for him, and spilt his tea on the cloth, for which he received a sharp rebuke from his grandmother. "Marjory, Marjory!" he cried in his despair; and then he seemed to hear her voice saying, "O Ber! dear Ber! try to be quiet and do not cry!" as he had heard it a hundred times in the little attic at home. Then he

remembered how, when his pain was very bad and he could not rest, Marjory would ask God to make him better and give him patience, and help him to bear the pain by thinking of all the pain Jesus bore. Then poor Ber turned the prayer of Marjory into his own prayer, and he fell at last into a soft sleep. Dreaming of home, and that one of Grannie's beautiful white doves was pluming her feathers in the bright sunshine, and that he heard the rustling of the lime tree by the Lodge, and that Marjory said, "It is such a beautiful day, Ber, father is come to carry you down to the beach, and I'll come and sit with you," he woke to find that some one was really moving him from his bed, and looking up, saw it was Mrs. Grimsby and his grandmother.

For Ber had slept late, and the packages had come from the "Dolphin," and Mrs. Rayner, anxious to settle herself as soon as possible, was carrying him to Mrs. Grimsby's room, while she put their own to right with their own things.

Long and weary days followed for poor Ber.

But Mrs. Rayner was satisfied that she had done wisely in coming to Plaistow, for she soon made herself so useful to Mrs. Grimsby that she and Ber were boarded free of cost, and the two empty rooms at the back of the house were as well occupied as empty. Mrs. Grimsby had tried letting them sometimes, but nobody who could get any others liked the aspect, which was indeed dreary in the extreme. The windows looked on a dark, black, unused churchyard, full of mouldering gravestones, and hemmed in with houses, except on the side where the north of the church abutted on it. Here poor little Ber lay and pined away his life, at his heart a bitter, ceaseless sorrow, and that sense of loss of which only true and loving ones whose lives have been bound up together know the full meaning.

But God did not forget the poor child. Mrs. Grimsby, who was touched at the sight of his pain, called in a doctor who attended one of her lodgers, and asked him if he could do anything for the child.

Dr. Scott examined him, and found that an abscess was forming in the hip, and that he must undergo an operation. Ber bore this bravely and well, and Dr. Scott became so deeply interested in his little patient that he brought him books and pictures, and was very soon the confidant of all poor Ber's troubles and griefs. Dr. Scott was one of those men whom we have all of us perhaps met with in our time, who care for the souls as well as the bodies of their patients, and he always left Ber happier than he found him, and held out to him the promise of a brighter and better home, where, if he never saw Marjory again here, he might surely hope to meet her in heaven.

"If I only knew," Ber wailed one day, "if I only *knew* where she was—it is so hard!"

"Yes," Dr. Scott said, "it is very hard, my boy; but what if God has taken her away for a time from you that you may learn to love Him better?"

"She loved Him," Ber said, "and it seems so hard to let her be miserable away from

me; and I know if she is alive she is miserable."

"It is very hard, no doubt," Dr. Scott said; "and yet there is *some* good reason for it: we shall see it one day."

Then Dr. Scott stroked Ber's white forehead as tenderly as Marjory could have done, and promised to bring him a fret-saw, and to help him to begin carving, and took from his pocket a prayer printed in clear type, which he fastened up on the wall opposite Ber's bed—that beautiful prayer for the week during which we especially remember the pain and sorrow of our dear Lord.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who of Thy tender love towards mankind hath sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility: Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"There, Ber! You see it was '*tender love*' which carried all the great pain of the cross, and so we must be sure it is the same tender love which has sent you your pain, and has taken from you for a time the sister you love so much."

"Sir, do you think she will ever come back? Is anything to be done?"

"*I* am doing all I can, setting inquiries afloat at all the police-stations, and I *have* great hopes she will be brought back."

So, with those cheering words, the good doctor left him.

That evening, when Mrs. Rayner was sitting knitting by the fire as in old times at the Lodge at home, Ber saw she was wiping away a tear now and then. And the thought struck him that perhaps she too was unhappy about Marjory. Ber and his grandmother never had any sympathy between them, and during the month they had spent at Plaistow they had seemed to be farther apart than ever. Mrs. Grimsby, though, as the shopman had said, "a party not to be trifled with," was true to her

agreement, for she was a strictly just and upright woman. She was rough and blunt, and somewhat careless of other people's feelings, but she had no intention of being unkind.

Ber did not want for anything; and even when Dr. Scott ordered him a little port wine, Mrs. Grimsby herself brought him a bottle. Meantime Mrs. Rayner worked hard; never was the food so well cooked or the lodgers' rooms so well kept. She was up in the dark winter mornings before any of the London household thought of stirring, and Mrs. Grimsby felt the comfort of a brightly burning fire when she came downstairs, a kettle boiling, and all the preparations neatly made for breakfast. Even the little slovenly maid-of-all-work grew active and more cleanly, and Mrs. Grimsby felt she had concluded a good bargain with Aunt Rayner. But of Aunt Rayner herself she could make nothing. She spoke when she was spoken to, but, as in the village at home amongst her own people, she held herself apart. As day by day passed and no tidings came of the lost Marjory, the expression

of her face grew more and more sad and wretched. Every morning she watched for the postman, and as the hours drew on for later deliveries, she would listen to catch every sound. Then sometimes she would go down to the police-station at Plaistow, where the description of Marjory was posted up, and ask, "Is there any news of that child?" And then, when some tall policeman looked down from the height of his stiff collar and said, "No, none that I have heard of," she would turn back again hopelessly to her work, which for a woman of sixty-four was hard enough. Deep in her heart was not only grief for the loss of the child—though she felt that more than any one guessed—but grief that her son, the idol of her heart, the one great love of her whole life, the son of whom she was so proud—that he should come back to St. Chad's and find his Marjory gone perhaps! And oh!—terrible thought!—when he read the letter she had left for him, in case he should return, in Miss White's care, and that he should come to Plaistow and find there

no little Marjory—the pride of his heart, the light of his eyes, the child who had a sort of double love bestowed on her for her dead mother's sake! Reproaches from him she could never bear; and yet, did she not deserve them? It would kill her outright if her Albert said he could never forgive her, if he reproached her for carelessness, and told her, what she told herself a hundred times a day, that she ought to have stayed at St. Chad's. Thoughts like these were bringing the tears to her dim eyes that evening, and as Ber watched her, a sudden thrill of sympathy made him say softly—

“Grannie, Dr. Scott says he thinks Marjory will come back. Grannie!”—for there was no reply—“he is inquiring everywhere about her, and he says, if I am patient, perhaps God will bring her back.”

Mrs. Rayner dropped her knitting from her hand, and said—

“*Never*, never, Ber! It's my punishment for bringing you two poor children to live amongst strangers, and I shall never dare

to look upon your father's face again. I—I—that have lost his little Marjory—his little Marjory," she repeated; then, to Ber's surprise, Mrs. Rayner broke out into convulsive crying; the proud spirit was humbled, the reserve which had held her in a frozen grasp melted, as she moaned, "O Ber, Ber! I am a miserable woman!"

Then Ber slipped off his little bed, and limping as well as he could up to his grandmother's chair, said—

"O Grannie dear! let us love one another for Marjory's sake; please do let us, and don't cry, for Marjory's sake."

With a sudden impulse Mrs. Rayner turned and took the poor child on her knee, kissing him fondly, as she had kissed his father in the days of his childhood, and from this time forth Ber and his grandmother were friends.

So Marjory's influence was felt though she was separated from them—so, like the dew of Hermon, falling on sterile places to quicken and to bless, was Marjory's spirit present—so

the prayer she was praying in her strange new life for them she loved found an answer—so God was proving Himself what she ever called Him—ah! and *felt* Him to be—her best Friend!

CHAPTER X.

ESCAPE.

“**B**EAUTY and the Beast” proved what old Mr. Nixon triumphantly called “a grand success;” and “*The last night positively*” was announced again and again. Marjory’s sweet, sad face and natural grace were often selected for especial admiration; and our poor little “Beauty” had often to come before the curtain and curtsy her thanks for flowers and bonbons which were showered upon her. But day by day the child grew thinner and less able to bear the strain put on her. Many a time did Dolly come to her little bed, as she did on the first evening of her arrival, and find her sobbing piteously. Mrs. Martini got all sorts of little delicacies to tempt her appetite, and made her swallow dis-

tasteful doses of porter and wine, but all to no purpose.

"Oh, when may I go home?" she would ask in plaintive tones, and Mrs. Martini would repeat her falsehood, and say—

"Why, you see, there is no place called Plaistow here in these parts, so how can I get you home? You shall go back to your father when we can find him."

Dolly, however, in spite of the letter not being answered, felt sure that there was a place called Plaistow, and she turned over in her mind how she should escape from Mrs. Martini's vigilance and post another letter. Then, as the January days began to lengthen, Mr. Nixon's lease of the Empress Theatre ran out, and signs of packing and removal began. Dolly understood them, and confided to Marjory that she believed they might be going away to some other place very soon.

"They won't want me then, will they?" Marjory said eagerly. "They will let me go then; but where am I to go, and how shall I find my grandmother?"

"They *will* want you," Dolly said with her little shrewd, knowing nod. "You are far too pretty for them to let you slip. I saw the bill Mr. Nixon was making out the other day, and you are named as 'Mademoiselle Myra.' You'll soon be set to another piece, depend upon it. And I think they are going to Portsmouth."

The children were talking together in their old fashion by the window; for again it was the day of rest, when even the poor little actors in pantomines have a cessation from their labours. Presently Dolly said—

"Why don't you write to some of the folks at St. Chad's? There! I've got it now, of course. Write to the lady you say was so good to you—the parson's sister—and tell her where you are. I'll keep the letter about me till I drop it into the post myself this time, for I believe that wicked Jem never did post the other. He is always asking me, with that horrid grin of his, whether I've heard from Plaistow. I'll get the paper and a pen and ink this time, and then we'll manage it, though

I don't know what will become of me when you are gone. Somehow, I think you'll teach me to be good at last. I don't say so many bad words as I did, do I, Marjory? And I don't fly into such rages with old Nixon when he makes my legs sting with his nasty whip. Look! this is what I caught yesterday for not doing the new step right;" and poor Dolly pulled down her stockings and showed Marjory a number of lurid red marks on her little thin legs.

"O Dolly, Dolly! does he often do that?"

"Yes, I should just think he does; but these are very bad stings—the skin is nearly broken."

Marjory bound up the poor leg with a handkerchief dipped in water, and then took Dolly in her arms, and the two children lay down on the bed together, nestling close.

"Dolly," Marjory said, "I don't think, unless I can get away soon, I shall get away at all. I feel so strange every night in the heat and glare, and my legs and back ache. Then I can't sleep—not real sleep. I see so many faces all the time, and hear that dreadful band

at the theatre. I think I am ill, Dolly, and perhaps I am going to die."

"Oh, no, no, Marjory; don't say that, pray don't; I can't bear to hear it."

"But I should be happy then, Dolly; for Jesus would make me happy, and I should not fret as I do now for Ber and father. I should find mother in heaven, and tell her I had done all I could for Ber."

Dolly pressed still closer to Marjory, and she went on—

"*If* I die, Dolly, you must promise me never to forget Ber, and try to find him, and tell him how miserable I was that I lost him. Promise, Dolly."

"Yes; but you must not go, Marjory."

"It won't make me die the sooner for saying this; and you see, Dolly, if it were not for you, I should leave behind' no one who would ever care for Ber, or be able to tell him about me; but I know you would try to find him, Dolly."

"Yes, *that* I would," said Dolly. "I'd run away from here first before I'd miss any chance of finding him. Look here, Marjory!

Shall you and I run away, and try if we can get to Plaistow?"

"I don't know whether it would be right for you, Dolly, to leave your uncle."

"He ain't my real uncle. I expect I've no one belonging to me. I expect they picked me up when I was small, for I've danced ever since I can remember, years and years. Marjory, let's run away the moment we can get off. We can find out if Plaistow is far off; anyhow we can try. *Will* you?"

"I'll think of it, dear. Now let us be quiet, I feel so sleepy. Let me hear if you know your hymn—the last I taught you. Say it—the one about the pain of Jesus, that Ber liked best."

Dolly began to say in her sing-song tone the hymn dear to the heart of so many children, and before she got to the verse—

"They nailed His hands, they pierced His side,
Their angry hearts no pity knew :
'Father, forgive them,' Jesus cried,
'They know not what they do,'"

Marjory had sunk into a heavy sleep. When Dolly got up to go into the sitting-room for

tea, Marjory was still sleeping. She shuffled about, and put on her shoes and stockings, but Marjory did not stir. Mrs. Martini missed her, and went to look at her, shading the candle with her hand and stooping down over her.

"She is ill," Dolly said, who had followed Mrs. Martini on tiptoe back into the room. "She thinks she is going to die!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mrs. Martini sharply; "she is all right."

But nevertheless she was uneasy, and called her husband to look at the pale, pinched face, turned up toward the smoky, low ceiling of the room, the lips half parted, the long curled lashes lying motionless on the pallid cheeks, the breath coming at short and uncertain intervals.

"She is lying on her back, you stupid woman," was all the sympathy Mr. Martini vouchsafed, "that's what's the matter. Rouse her up and give her a good sip of brandy and water instead of tea."

"We had better send her home, Richard, we had indeed; she'll die on our hands!"

"She must act to-morrow night for the last time here, anyhow; and the change to Plymouth will set her up. She won't be on the boards again for a month, I daresay. She is too valuable to lose. I shall take her with us."

Dolly heard and marked all that was said; and when Mr. Martini finished with, "You and the two children can be off on Tuesday, if you like, and leave Nixon and me to follow," she made up her mind that, if escape was to be attempted, it must be at once. Plymouth was hundreds of miles off—Jem said so. There would be no chance for them if ever they got there; the attempt must be made before. So Dolly laid her plans, and circumstances were in her favour.

The next night, the last night of Mr. Nixon's engagement of the theatre, Dolly determined to try and escape with her friend. She hoped to elude Mr. and Mrs. Martini in the bustle in the green-room after the performance, when the children who had acted were paid their wages and dispersed to their homes for the season. Just, however, as "Beauty" was

appearing, crowned and covered with her thin veil of silver tissue in the transformation scene, just as the clapping of hands and stamping of feet and rough noisy applause was at its height, a cry rose shrill and piercing from the pit of "*Fire ! fire !*" Instantly all was confusion and dismay. The little fairies rushed hither and thither, the performance was stopped, and one little fairy, the best dancer—Dolly—was seen to fly over to "Beauty," saying, "*Now, now ! come now !*" "Beauty" stepped down from her throne, and Dolly, seizing her by the hand, saying, "I know the way," dragged her along one of the narrow passages, which was only used by the men who worked the machinery, and presently a gush of cold, foggy air told Dolly that they were in the open street. It was a bright, frosty, starlit night, and Dolly ran quickly round the first corner, holding Marjory's hand tightly in hers, and encouraging her to run. But poor Marjory was breathless and exhausted, and she sank down on the steps of a church in her thin gaudy dress, saying, "No, Dolly, Dolly ; I can't run, I can't."

The excitement in the neighbourhood of the Empress Theatre on hearing the cry of "Fire" and seeing great flames shoot up from the roof was so great, that the children were unheeded. The crowd was all rushing helter-skelter to the scene of action in the opposite direction, and never heeded the two shivering children. Presently a door at the side of the church opened, and a tall man came out, locking it behind him. Dolly caught hold of his thick black overcoat as he passed, and said, "Oh, sir, sir! tell us if we are far from Plaistow?"

"Plaistow! Yes, a long way. This is Camberwell; but the train will take you there, only you must change several times. What are you doing here at this time of night?"

"Oh! please, sir, Marjory wants to get home to her brother at Plaistow, and we don't know how to do it. Could you help us?"

"Is this Marjory?" the clergyman said, stooping down over poor Marjory in her blue and white tinsel dress, her thin flowing attire. "Is this Marjory? Why, you must belong to one of the theatres."



"Fire! Fire!"—See page 125.

"We did, sir, but we hate it—we hate it; we want to get away; and Marjory says she's going to die. Oh! pray, pray help us! Marjory, speak quick, or perhaps they will miss us and come after us. Do speak, Marjory," said poor Dolly, breaking into tears, her teeth chattering with cold, and her hands clasped tightly together as she prayed her little friend to make some sign.

"She can't speak; she is insensible. Now follow me," the clergyman said; and raising the poor lost Marjory in his arms, he carried her to a red brick house in the next street, with lights in the windows, and a look of comfort even in the exterior.

"Here, Mary," he said, as he opened the door into a large square hall where a large fire was burning,—“Here, Mary, are two poor little shivering waifs and strays I have picked up for you.”

The lady thus addressed rose from a table which was covered with books and papers, and said—

"O Edward! how ill she looks! Give her to

me;" and then Marjory was taken by another pair of arms—tender maternal arms—and laid gently down upon a wide old-fashioned sofa by the fire.

"Poor, poor children! they must have come from the theatre. Oh, how sad it is to see them! She is a lovely child, Edward. What is her name, my dear? She is not your sister?" the lady said, turning to poor Dolly, whose little wizzen face with its odd expression was less attractive.

But Dolly poured out the whole story with passionate earnestness. She told how unhappy Marjory had been, and how good she was, and how she tried to make every one else good, and how, if only the gentleman would help her, she didn't mind so much about herself; she would go back to Mr. Martini, for in the commotion about the fire they would hardly have missed her, and she could find her way back, if *only* Marjory was taken care of.

"We will do what we can for both of you," Mr. Gifford said. "Look! your poor little friend is recovering."

"Ber!" Marjory said, starting up, "Ber! Grannie! I have come home at last! God has not forsaken me!"

"You shall go home, my dear child, but not to-night; meantime you are safe with me," Mrs. Gifford said, "and I am thankful God has sent us to help you."

Marjory looked up at the kind lady's face bending over her, and smiled a sad, sweet smile, putting her hand to her forehead as if to collect her thoughts.

"There *is* such a place as Plaistow, ma'am, isn't there?"

"Yes, dear, yes; and you shall be taken there as soon as you are able to go, though that will not be till you have had a good night's rest."

"And Dolly too?"

"Yes," Mr. Gifford said, "and Dolly too."

CHAPTER XI.

UNITED AT LAST.

THE next day Ber was lying on his couch by the window of Mrs. Grimsby's sitting-room over the shop ; for Ber was in great favour, and he was carried by Mrs. Grimsby herself from the dreary quarters at the back of the house to a more cheerful position, where he could see what was passing in the street. In the hurry and bustle and money-making of Mrs. Grimsby's life, this poor suffering child had come to awake softer feelings which had long been buried, and call back memories of the one baby God had given her far back in the days of her youth, and had taken from her when he was two years old.

"Ber's eyes," she said to herself, "reminded her of little Jim's when he lay dying; and

besides, it must be a heart of stone not to melt at the sight of the poor child's pain and grief for his sister."

It was Dr. Scott who had suggested that the change to the front of the house in the daytime would be a good one for Ber. Now, when the western sunshine of the first February days was lying on the roof of the opposite house, Ber was gazing up at the strips of sky seen above, and thinking of Marjory and of her favourite psalm—the psalm she was singing to herself as she tripped so gaily down the lane at St. Chad's on the day when we saw her first.

"The Lord shall give strength unto His people. The Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace!" Peace without Marjory had seemed for a long time impossible to Ber; but now, this afternoon, as he felt comparatively free from pain, and the sunshine was golden bright, and the sky looked as it looked through the trees round the Lodge at home, he seemed to feel its influence. "*Strength* to bear," he thought, might have come to *him*,

and the blessing of peace, far above that blue sky, to *her*; for he could not bring himself to believe that, if Marjory were still alive, she would not have found means to come to him. Nothing but death, so thought poor Ber, could part him from Marjory. And as thus he thought, the sudden opening of the door made him start and turn his head.

"What is it, Grannie? Grannie!" he repeated, for tears were coursing each other down Mrs. Rayner's cheeks.

"Ber, Ber! she is found!" And then, with a cry which rung through the house, the lame boy raised himself with outstretched arms as a tall gentleman came in bearing the form of his sister.

"Ah, Ber! ah, dear Ber!" she said, as Mr. Gifford laid her down on the couch; and the two children clasped each other in a long, long embrace.

Yes, Marjory was come back; but how changed from the Marjory of old! Languid and feeble and weary, she could scarcely lift herself at last from her brother's arms; and when she

did so, and he saw her face, he looked at it as if it struck him with a strange surprise.

"Darling Ber! I am glad to see you," she said; "and here is poor Dolly. You must be kind to Dolly for my sake. Come and speak to him, Dolly." And then Dolly drew near and examined Ber attentively with her keen eyes; and Ber said to himself—

"I wish she had not come. I don't like her; she looks like a little old woman."

He did not say this to Marjory, however, and put out his hand to Dolly.

"She has been so good to me, Ber. And Mr. Gifford is never going to let her go back to the theatre; he is going to take care of her at his orphanage."

Dolly's face puckered up, and she muttered, "I'd rather stay with you. I'll get wicked if I don't."

And now the room was full; for Mrs. Grimsby and Mrs. Rayner, and the men from the shop, and the little maid-of-all-work were all anxious to see lost Marjory. She was dressed in a neat frock of blue serge, and had a pretty black hat

which Mrs. Gifford had given her; and all the traces of her sad life as the "Beauty" at the theatre seemed to have passed from her with the flimsy, tawdry garments she had left at St. Olave's Vicarage.

Soon Mr. Gifford said he must go and take Dolly with him, but he would come again soon, and bring Mrs. Gifford to see Marjory.

"Good-bye, and thank you, sir, a hundred times," Marjory said, raising her face to his. "*Do* come again, and before *very* long."

Poor Dolly allowed herself to be led away; but when she had got to the door, she turned back and rushed to Marjory, clinging to her passionately.

"Ask that I may come back too; say I shall die if they don't let me see you."

"You shall come back if you are good and obedient," Mr. Gifford said, firmly; "but you must come with me now, as you are told."

Then Mrs. Grimsby and Grannie went down with the gentleman, and Ber and Marjory were left alone together.

"I am better," Ber said. "I can walk a little bit; and O Marjory! I have got *such* a nice doctor. He has helped me ever so much, as *you* used to help me, you know. Marjory, aren't you glad I am better?" for Marjory was silent.

"The blessing of peace!" she murmured. "I hope father will come first, and then I shall be ready to go."

Ber was awestruck. He felt a change had passed over his sister. She was the same yet not the same. What could it mean?

Dr. Scott came the next day, and then another little couch was made up on two chairs in Mrs. Grimsby's sitting-room, so that the children might be together. With the quiet and the good food, and the reunion with Ber, and the delight of finding her grandmother kind and affectionate to them both, Marjory revived; but Dr. Scott looked grave when, a fortnight after the child's return, Mrs. Rayner asked him what he thought of Marjory.

"Very seriously," he said; "her health is greatly undermined. The action of her heart

is weak, and the heated air of the theatre and all she went through there has been a great strain on her. She may live; youth may assert itself, and she may recover; but I confess I think the lame boy has a better prospect of life than his sister."

"A better prospect!" he repeated, checking himself. "I ought not to say that. What can be better than the prospect of eternal life, into which that child may soon enter?"

"Oh, sir, don't say she won't live, at least till her father returns."

"When do you expect him?"

"I have had a letter from my old home with an enclosure of money, sir, sent on to me. He says he has prospered wonderful, and thinks he may see us all in the summer. He has had high wages, and over and above that, he has made good trade at the Chinese ports. He says one more voyage and he will be independent. I don't quite know what he means, but the child seems satisfied. She was her father's friend, sir, I may say. She was always his companion, and he just dotes on her."

"Poor man!" was all Dr. Scott said as he bid Mrs. Rayner "good morning."

And now the spring days lengthened, and April came beautiful and radiant with the singing of birds and the blossoming of flowers, and the glory of new-found awakening life. In all these weeks Marjory had got neither perceptibly worse nor better. She would even get up sometimes, and move about the room, performing little offices of love for her brother, and trying to help her grandmother as in days past. She was never idle, and knitted and sewed, and helped her brother with his carving, in which, with Dr. Scott's assistance, he was becoming quite a proficient. Indeed, Ber, happy in the possession of his sister and under Dr. Scott's careful and excellent treatment, was steadily improving. He could now move about on his crutches, and the pain in his back was very much less.

"When father comes back," Ber said one day, "shall we go back to St. Chad's, Marjory?"

"I don't know, dear," Marjory said, list-

lessly, for the idea of all exertion was painful to her.

"We could go in Captain Smith's ship again; we could easily do that, Marjory. We could lie on the deck all these fine nights; and I should like to see Jock again and every one. I know father will take us if we ask him when he comes back. It is nice to have Grannie so kind—is it not?" Ber said after a pause. "She is not like the same grandmother who used to be so cross and disagreeable at St. Chad's. And when we first came here, and you were lost, it was so dreadful; she neither spoke nor cried, and used to look like a stone—so hard and cold. Mrs. Grimsby, too, how kind she is, and Dr. Scott, and Mr. Gifford. The only person I *don't* like now is that little Dolly."

"O Ber! I am so sorry, for I am sure I don't know what I should have done all those long weeks at the theatre without her. I think you ought to like poor Dolly for my sake; and don't you see how happy she is to come here every Sunday to see me?"

"Yes," said Bertie, doubtfully; "but she has

such a cunning little face. It reminds me of one of the weasels that used to run about at St. Chad's; it's like a woman's face, not a child's."

"O Ber! that is all from the life she has led—dancing at night and practising and rehearsing all day, and hearing such bad talk and dreadful language. Then they gave her such quantities of gin and spirits to keep her small, and Mr. Martini often beat her cruelly. You should love her, and be sorry for her, I think."

"I'll try," said Ber, "for *your* sake. It seems to me everything that is done is for your sake, Marjory." Marjory smiled. "I mean everything good, and people's kindness, and all that; still, we can't love every one alike."

"No, no," Marjory said, earnestly, "I can't love the Martinis and old Mr. Nixon, and yet I am very sorry for them. That fire must have nearly ruined them, and I can't think what they will do. Mr. Gifford said he never saw people so miserable as the day he went to speak to them about me and Dolly."

"They were angry at losing you, I expect."

"Yes, and they wanted to have Dolly back; but Mr. Gifford found she was not really a relation; they had picked her up very much as they picked up me, and Dolly begged and prayed so hard not to go back to them, so you know she is to stay in the Orphanage till she is ready to come and help Grannie and father when he comes home, and do all I shall never do again."

Ber could not bear the least allusion to Marjory's illness increasing; indeed, he tried to blind himself to it, and would even ask her to do things for him which implied some exertion, just to persuade himself that she really *was* getting better. A common mode of self-deception, in which we all indulge sometimes, expressed so well in the words, "Hoping against hope."

"Will change of air do anything for her, sir?" Mrs. Grimsby asked Dr. Scott one morning; "because I am sure, if you think so, I'll not mind paying for it."

Dr. Scott hesitated. "It is a doubtful matter," he said; "there is so much debility, and I think you must notice that the breathlessness when she exerts herself increases. I hardly know whether it would be kind to risk the fatigue which the removal would cause. I mean, I doubt if the benefit of country air would not be counter-balanced by the waste of her small stock of strength in a journey. I am very sorry for you," Dr. Scott said kindly, "with two invalid children so unexpectedly on your hands."

"Well, sir, I have got so fond of them both, I don't know that I mind the trouble, and poor Auntie is nearly like another head and pair of hands to me. It is wonderful how much better we get on since she came."

The idea of removing Marjory into country or sea air was for the time laid aside, especially as the child herself, when consulted about it by Mr. Gifford, said—

"I would rather be quiet here, sir, and wait for father. If moving made me worse, I might go before he came home."

"You are happy whichever way it is, Marjory?" Mr. Gifford said.

"Yes, sir," the child said. "God knows best; but—but, oh! I *do* pray that He will let me see father once more."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLESSING OF PEACE.

ARJORY'S wish was granted. Exactly a year after the date of his sailing, Albert Rayner returned to St. Chad's. He was passing up the village street, almost expecting to see Jock come out to meet him—almost expecting to see his Marjory's light figure trip down the hill towards him—almost expecting to hear her sweet silvery voice cry, *Father, Father!*

Instead, a voice less musical and more harsh in its tone called out, "Mr. Rayner! Here!"

Turning in the twilight, Albert Rayner saw Miss White waving a white handkerchief at him from the door of her little shop, which was as stuffed full of every kind of ware as it had ever been.

"Hallo! Miss White; here I am! Why, bless me, you look younger than ever; but I can't stop now."



"Yes, you must stop, Mr. Rayner; here's two letters for you. Have you heard nothing since you went away?"

"Not one word. My mother is no scribe,

and I expect, if she wrote, the letter was lost for want of proper direction."

"Well, Mrs. Rayner and the children went to London, to a place called Plaistow, last fall, about a month before Christmas."

"To London! whatever for?"

"To live with a relative, a Mrs. Grimsby, who offered your mother a home; for you know the lady at the Court died just after you sailed, and the place was put up for sale, and there it stands empty now, for no one bought it, and of course your mother lost her place."

"Poor soul! and my children, what have they done? Did they get my letter? I sent them home money."

"Yes, yes; that got to them right enough, and they are in very comfortable quarters, no fear about that; but"——

"But what? Is my poor boy gone?"

"No, no; he is better; they say; for a good doctor up there—but you should read your letters, Mr. Rayner, and then step in and take a bit of supper. I'll do a rasher of bacon—if——"

That was a grand offer for Miss White to make, and it rather stuck in her throat.

"No, thank you. I'll go back to the station, and take the next train to London. I'll catch it if I walk fast to Castleton. I'd like to have patted my dog on the head. Who has looked after him? But I must not wait. Good evening, Miss White; remember me to all friends;" and snatching the letters up, Albert Rayner ran off again.

"Stop and read your letters, Mr. Rayner."

But Miss White called in vain. Albert Rayner strode on, a weight at his heart that he dare scarcely realise or define. He walked fast over the six miles to Castleton, and was just in time for the last train. By the light at the waiting-room at King's Cross Station he at last deciphered his letters. He opened the one that had been written last.

"Marjory has come home, thank God; she has been very ill, but is better. Let us see you, my dear son, as soon as possible after you receive this."

One glance at the address, and Albert Rayner

waited to read no more. He was threading his way through streets, and lanes, and suburbs to Plaistow, just as the August morning was dawning over church spire and steeple, over chimneys and roofs, over the broad Thames with its forest of masts, over the dome of St. Paul's, high and dim, like a phantom in the far distance against the hazy sky.

Marjory, Marjory! where had she been, what had they done to her? A nice thing if his mother had allowed evil to befall his child—his darling, his Marjory. God had prospered his voyage; he had wiped off two-thirds of that heavy debt to James Davies; he would make one more voyage and all would be well. He would establish the children and his mother in some nice snug little cottage far away from London, and the close heavy air which felt doubly oppressive to him after his year at sea. Then he made plans as he strode along, and reached Rosemary Buildings just as a boy was taking down Mrs. Grimsby's shutters, and a woman in a neat holland apron and bib was polishing the brass on the side door till it

shone like burnished gold. The clock near by struck seven; the woman turned her head, and Albert Rayner exclaimed, "Mother!" Mrs. Rayner threw down her leather and brush, and put her arm round her son's neck.

"Well," he said, "who would have thought of finding you here? Where are the children?"

"Have you had my letters, Albert?"

"Yes, here they are. I have not read both of them—one was enough. How is Marjory?"

"We have thought her better, but the heat has tried her."

"What did you bring her here for, and do what you could to kill her, eh? She can't breathe in air like this, I know; and what do you mean by her coming back? Where had she been to? Come now, speak up, mother?"

Mrs. Rayner struggled hard for composure.

"I did it for the best, Albert. We should have starved; and we have had every comfort here—*she* has—Ber has. Kezia Grimsby may be rough, but she is kind, that she is—and generous."

"Kezia Grimsby indeed! Tell me about my child. *Is* she better? Can I see her? Or," as his mother was still silent, as he took her roughly by the arm, "*or is she dead?*"

"No, no, Albert, it's not so bad as that. She is just pining for you. But come in and get your breakfast, and don't go in on her in a flurry. She—well, she is very weak, bless her!"

Albert Rayner sunk down into the nearest chair in Mrs. Grimsby's back sitting-room, and folding his arms, buried his face upon them as he leaned on the table. Presently he looked up. His mother's face struck him with remorse. She loved him as *he* loved Marjory. Why had he been so gruff and angry with her?

"Mother, we must get her away to St. Chad's. Jack Smith's bark is in the Victoria Docks. I'll get him to take the children down home as soon as I can. Come, cheer up, mother. You did it for the best, and *I* did it for the best too when I went out to China. So now let bygones be bygones, and let us only think of

getting Marjory out where she can breathe. Give me another kiss, mother."

Poor Mrs. Rayner broke down at this, and saying between her sobs that she would go and prepare the children for seeing their father, she left him alone.

A month later, when the calm of a golden September evening lay upon the waters of St. Chad's Bay, when peace and rest seemed to hover over all things as the wings of a dove hover over its nest, in the garden before Miss Birch's cottage Marjory lay on a wide garden seat, supported by pillows and her father's strong arms.

All day her breathing had been much oppressed, and she had gasped for breath and panted for air. So they had brought her out into the still, quiet garden, full of the scent of late roses and lavender; and she was smiling at them all with a beautiful, contented smile.

At her feet sat Ber, and behind her stood Dolly—Dolly, whom she had begged her father

to bring with them when Miss Birch kindly offered her cottage to them; and Albert Rayner brought his child there full of hope that the sea air and the quiet of her native place would soon call back his Marjory to life.

He was not full of hope now—not of *that* hope; he knew at last he must give her up, and that she was going from him. But through all that month father and child had enjoyed a sweet communion, such as is not often given to us to hold with our beloved ones.

“I am better now, father,” Marjory was saying; “it is so nice to breathe easily for a little time. Now I can talk, father. I want to say a few things, if you don’t mind.”

“No, my dear; say all you wish.”

“You will always be kind to Dolly, and let her take my place with Ber; she will love him for my sake. Father, I leave Dolly to you. And be sure you quite, quite forgive poor Uncle Jesse; and if he ever comes back, you will try to help him to be good, father, and to love God. When you go back to China, Grannie will take care of Ber and Dolly; but afterwards I should

like to think you would come back to live here. Will you, father?"

"Yes, my dear," her father said again; "but don't you talk any more."

"It does not hurt me now. I feel so much, much better."

Her father looked down into her face. All the sad, weary look of pain, all the restless oppression of the last few days was gone. Marjory was to have a gentle entrance into the haven where she would be at rest.

"My best, best love to Grannie. She did it all for the best; and it *was* for the best, father. See how much better Ber is for Dr. Scott; think how nice it is that poor Dolly is saved from that life. Ah, that life! it was dark and terrible." She paused a moment. "And then you, father; it has all been the best for you."

"No, no, my darling; no, Marjory."

"Oh! yes, for you love God now; and perhaps, who knows, if you had kept *me* you might not have felt you wanted Jesus so much. Father, kiss me."

Albert Rayner bent down and kissed his child again and again.

Then she lay quiet, and Miss Birch, who had been arranging her bed for her nearer to the window upstairs, came out and said—

“Had we not better carry her in now, Mr. Rayner?”

But Albert Rayner did not speak, and Miss Birch did not care to disturb him. She stood quietly by, and when Mr. and Miss Bumpstead came up the garden to inquire how Marjory was, she signed to them not to speak. They drew near gently and quietly, and saw how it was. The end was very near now. Presently Marjory spoke.

“It is all so beautiful, and *mother* is so pretty, Ber. O Ber, Ber! we must go together, and poor father too, he must come!”

Ber propped himself up on his crutches as he heard his name, and with a world of love and sorrow in his dreamy pathetic eyes, said, “Marjory!”

“Yes, dear, yes!” she said, faintly. “Jesus is here, quite near us. Ber! father! He is so

near. But we must shut the door now till to-morrow morning, for it is getting dark. Ber and Dolly and father must come in. It will be light in the morning."

Then she spoke no more. There was a slight shudder, a start, as she opened her eyes, and fixed them, not on her father, not on Ber, not on any earthly face, but on Him whom mortal eyes see not, but who reveals Himself to His children as the King in His beauty in the land which is very far off.

Just as the village clock chimed seven, just as the golden light faded from sea and sky, just as the evening shadows fell, little Marjory entered into the light of God. For her the "morrow morning" was indeed radiant, pure, and bright, with no cloud of sin or sorrow or crying to darken it for evermore. Oh, happy Marjory! The Lord has given strength unto His beloved; the Lord has given her the blessing of peace.

And we who are yet in all the strife and struggle of this troublesome world—we to whom the promised rest looks distant—we

who have yet to pray for strength and patience, let us not faint or be weary in well-doing, for in due season we too shall reap the blessing—the fullest, richest, blessing of God's eternal peace.

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